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AMERICAN
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No. 20
NOV.-DEC.

BLAZING WEST

10¢

starring

BANTAM BUCKAROO
HOODED
HORSEMAN



Odeon Whistley

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EXPLORING the SUPERNATURAL!

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AZINE--TO VENTURE INTO FOR-
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WORLDS! READ IT--AND WATCH
THE SUPERNATURAL COME ALIVE!
MEET GHOSTS, ZOMBIES, WERE-
WOLVES, VAMPIRES--CHILL TO
BLACK MAGIC FROM BEYOND
LIFE ITSELF--GASP AT STRANGER
THINGS THAN EVER THE MIND
OF MAN CONCEIVED!

It's ALL HERE FOR YOU IN
THE ONE MAGAZINE THAT
DARES TO BE DIFFERENT
...THAT DARES TO TELL
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OF A LIFETIME, READ

FORBIDDEN WORLDS

EXPLORING the SUPERNATURAL!

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on all
STANDS

The great new companion to "ADVENTURES INTO THE UNKNOWN!"

The HOODED HORSEMAN

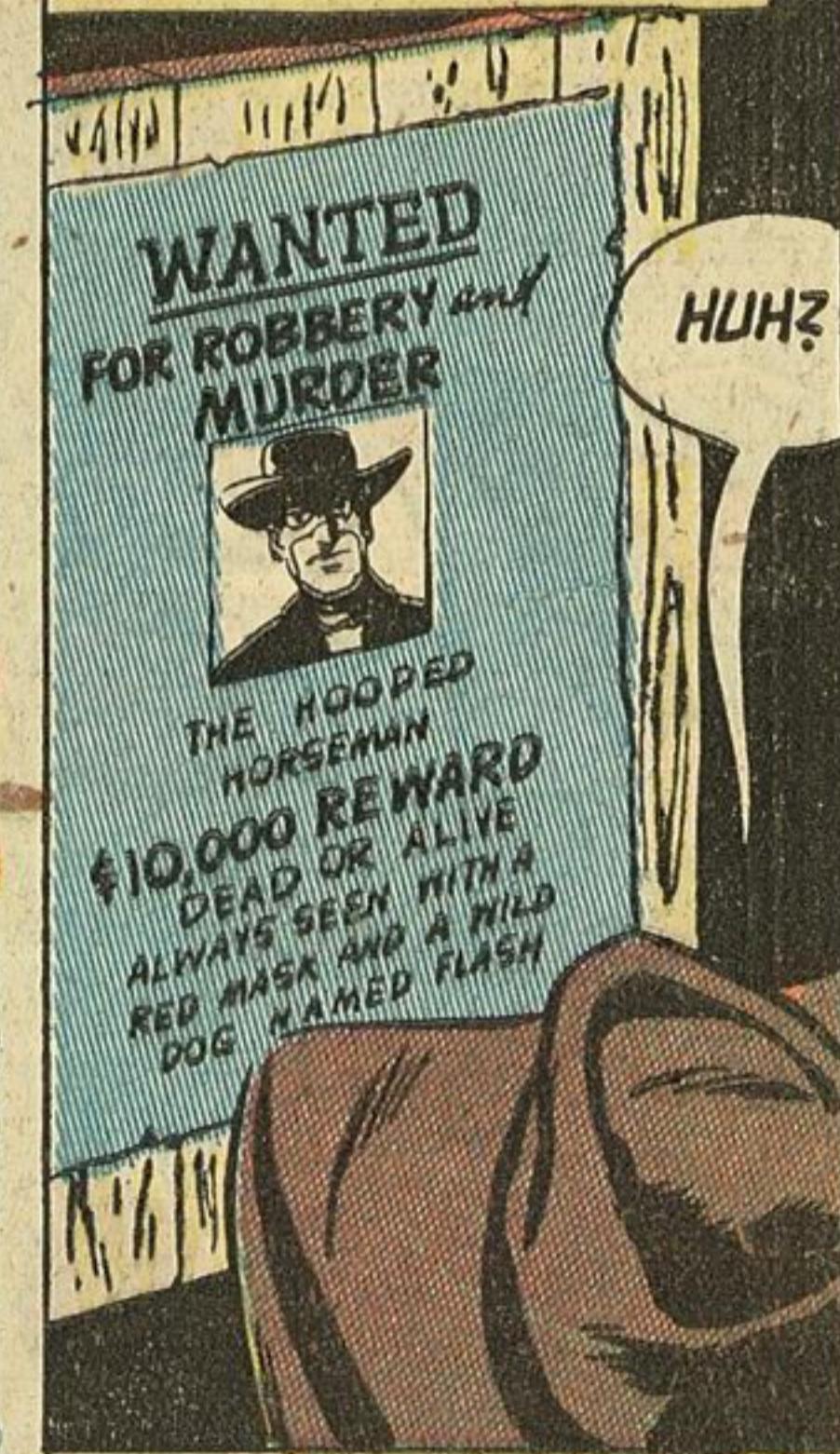


BURSTING LIKE A JUGGERNAUT THROUGH THE BLOOD-STAINED PAGES OF FRONTIER HISTORY COME THE GALLOPING FIGURES OF A CRIMSON-MASKED RIDER AND A FIERCE-EYED DOG... KNOWN AS THE HOODED HORSEMAN AND FLASH! THEY'RE THE DEADLIEST DUO IN THE BLAZING WEST... UNTIL THEY MEET UP WITH ANOTHER PAIR WHO GO BY THE SAME MONICKERS!

WE'VE NEVER BEEN IN THESE PARTS BEFORE, FLASH... MEBBE I'LL FIND SOME EXCITEMENT AS THE HOODED HORSEMAN IN THAT TOWN AHEAD OF US THAR! LET'S MOSEY ALONG AN' SEE!



BUT JUST OUTSIDE THE TOWN...



THAT POSTER MUST BE SOMEONE'S IDEA OF A PRACTICAL JOKE... BUT JEST IN CASE IT AIN'T, I'LL GO IN TUH TOWN AS BUD FRASER AN' INVESTIGATE! YUH'D BETTER STAY BEHIND IN THE SAGEBRUSH, FLASH... BECAUSE SOME GALOOT'S TRIGGER FINGER MIGHT GIT ITCHY FER THAT REWARD IF HE SEES A STRANGER RIDIN' IN WITH A DOG WHO ANSWERS TUH THE NAME O'FLASH!

WANTED
FOR ROBBERY AND MURDER

THE HOODED HORSEMAN
\$10,000 REWARD
DEAD OR ALIVE
ALWAYS SEEN WITH A RED MASK AND A WILD DOG NAMED FLASH.

HMM, A BARBER SHOP OUGHT TUH BE THE BEST PLACE IN TOWN TUH PICK UP INFORMATION AN' GOSSIP... AN' I DO NEED A SHAVE!

BARBE
SHO

NO MINERS ALLOWED UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY TWO OUNCES OF GOLD DUST

I'M A STRANGER IN THESE PARTS... AN' I SHORE WAS SURPRISED TUH SEE THAT THE LAW HERE IS AFTER THE HOODED HORSEMAN! WHAR I COME FROM, THE HOODED HORSEMAN IS ALWAYS ON THE SIDE O' THE LAW... NEVER AGAINST IT!

THAT'S WHAT WE'D HEARD... BUT WE FOUND OUT DIFFERENT WHEN THE HOODED HORSEMAN SHOWED UP IN TOWN AN' BEGAN A REIGN O' TERROR... SHOOTIN' AN' ROBBIN' AN' KILLIN'!

WE'D ALL HEARD THAT HE WAS THE BEST SHOT IN THE WEST, SO NO ONE EVEN TRIED TUH RESIST 'IM! HE COMES INTUH TOWN WITH HIS GANG AN' HIS WILD WOLF-DOG ALMOST EVERY NIGHT NOW... AN' WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS AWAY, THAR'S ALWAYS A COUPLE O' TOWNS-MEN DEAD!

I STILL CAIN'T BELIEVE THAT THE REAL HOODED HORSEMAN IS ACTUALLY DOIN' ALL THIS! MEBBE SOMEONE'S DISGUIISING HIMSELF AS THE HORSEMAN TUH MAKE YUH ALL TOO AFRAID TUH RESIST 'IM!

WHAT?

ANYONE WHO SAYS THAT THE HOODED HORSEMAN AIN'T THE WORST OUTLAW IN THE WEST, DOESN'T BELONG IN THIS TOWN. STRANGER!

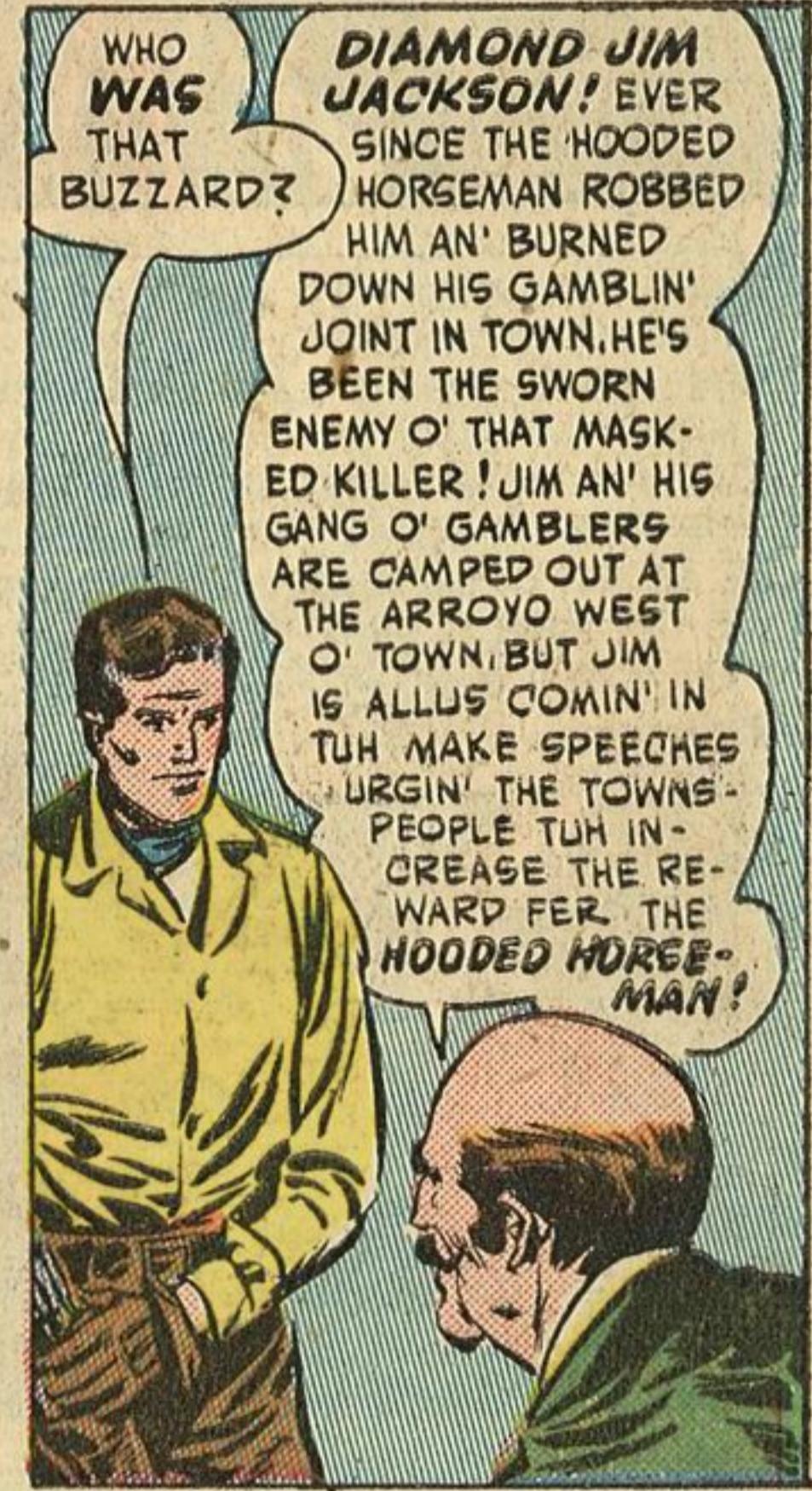
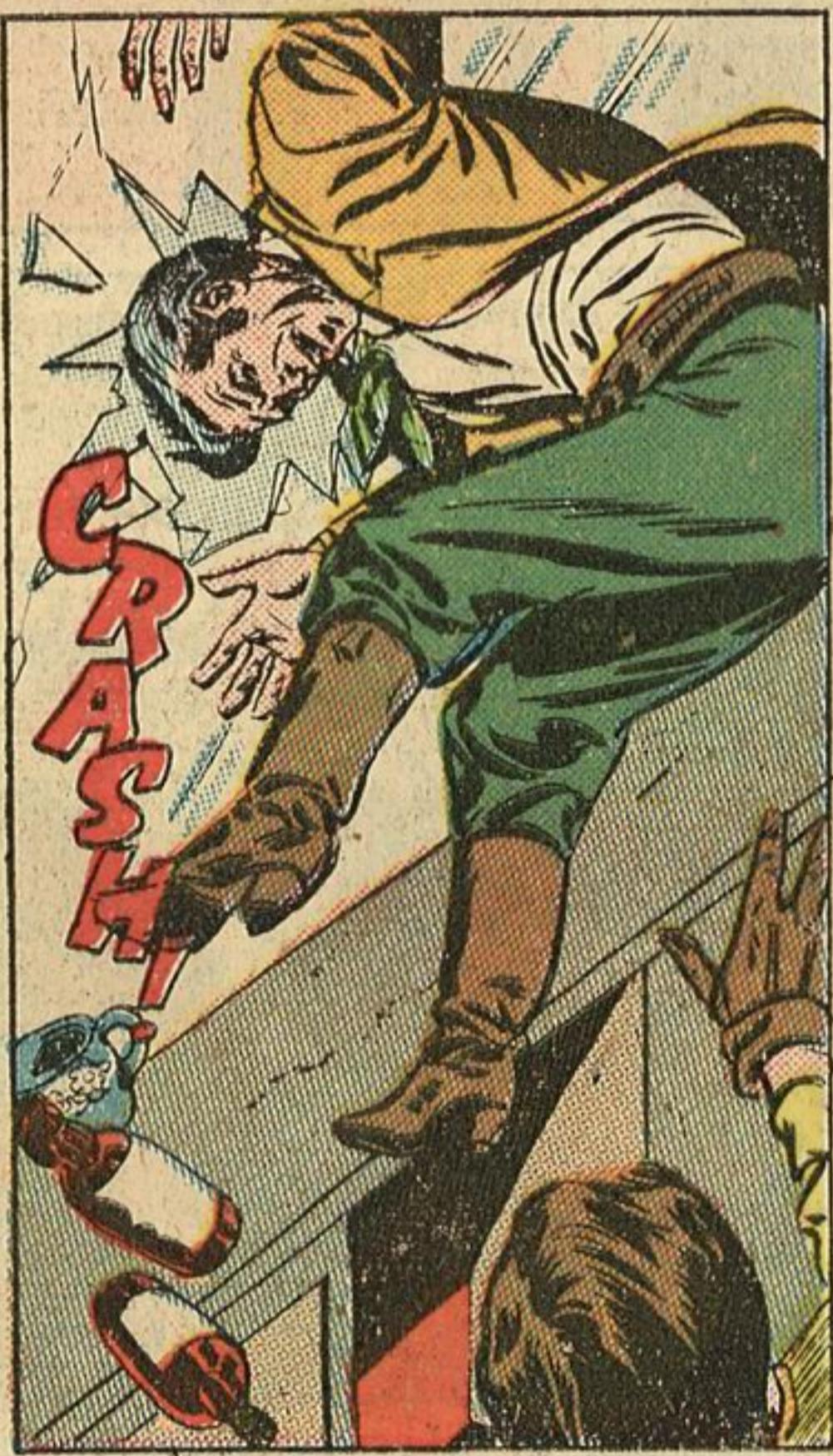
POW!

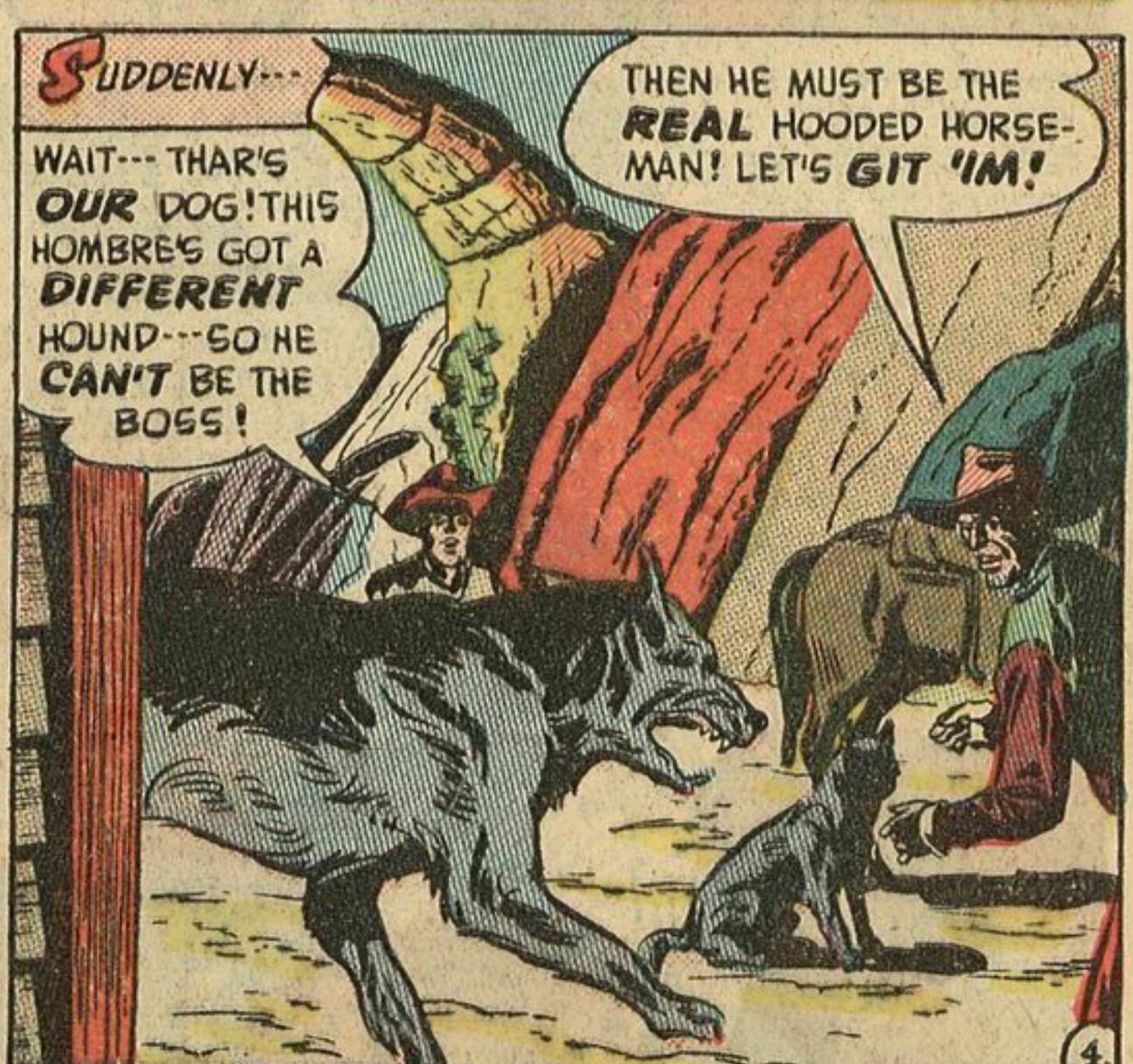
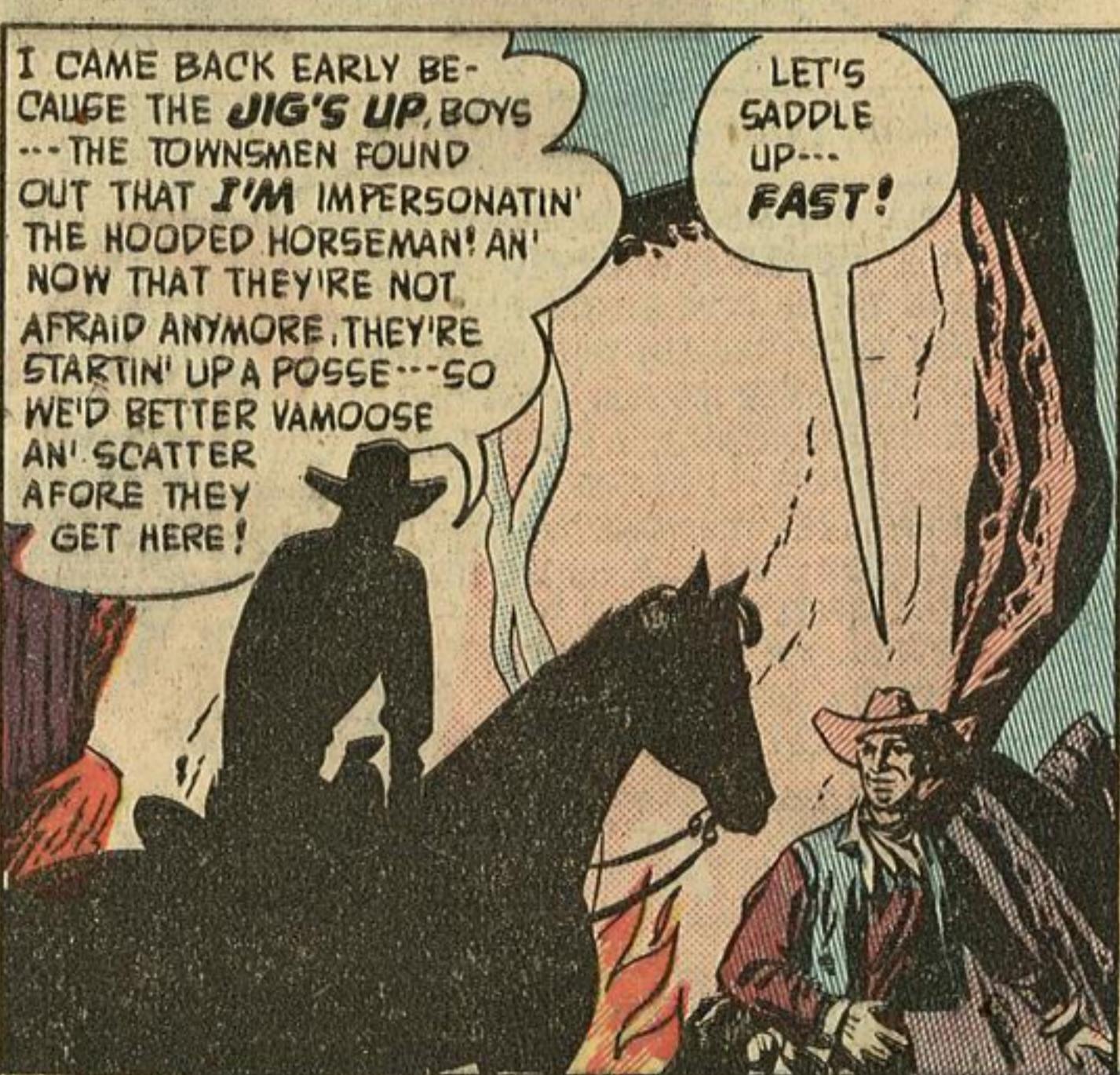
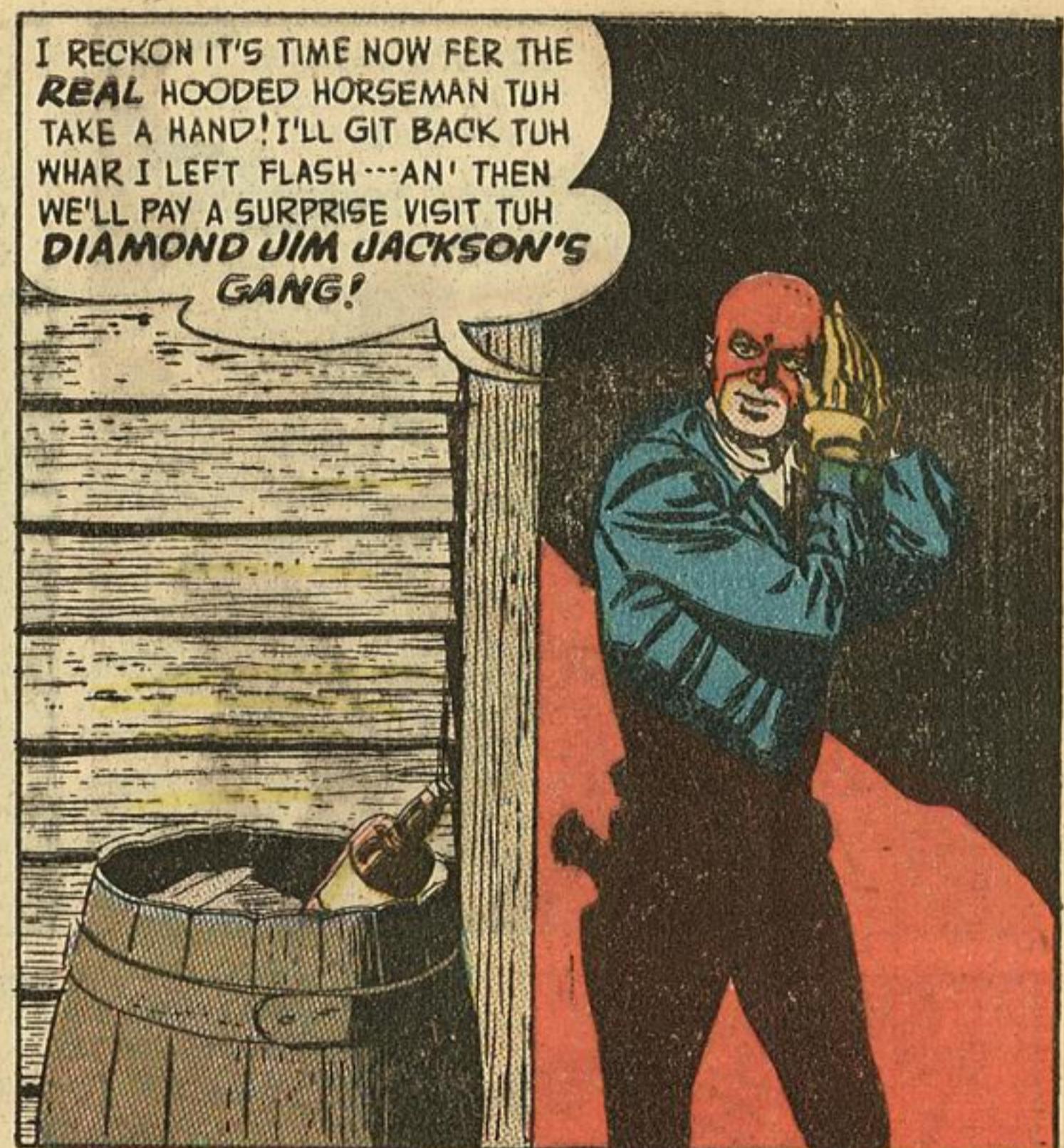
NOW GIT OUTA TOWN AFORE THAT SHEET AROUND YORE NECK IS REPLACED BY A ROPE!

BEFORE THAT EVER HAPPENS, PARDNER, YORE SHEET WILL BECOME YORE SHROUD!

WHA--!

BANG!





DROP THOSE IRONS, YUH VARMINTS --- AFORE I DROP ALL OF YUH IN YORE TRACKS!

HE --- HE'S A SHOOTIN' FOOL --- WE'D BETTER GIVE UP!

BANG!

BANG!

8 THE GANGMEN RAISE THEIR HANDS IN SURRENDER--

OH, OH --- THAT WOLF-DOG IS A HEAP BIGGER AN' HEAVIER THAN FLASH---AN' HE'S GITTIN' THE BETTER OF HIM! I HATE TUH CALL FLASH OFF, BECAUSE HE'LL THINK I'VE LOST FAITH IN 'IM! BUT IT'S THE ONLY THING I KIN DO---WE'VE GOTTA GET OUTA HERE NOW THAT MUH LITTLE TRICK DIDN'T PAN OUT!

FLASH TURNS A BEWILDERED FACE TOWARD HIS BELOVED MASTER'S VOICE--- AND HE HESITATES, HATING TO TURN TAIL! BUT OBEDIENCE WINS OUT OVER THE DESIRE TO REDEEM HIMSELF...

C'MON, FLASH... GET AWAY FROM HIM! LET'S MAKE A RUN FER IT!

I DIDN'T CALL YUH OFF BECAUSE I THOUGHT YUH COULDN'T WIN! I'VE STILL GOT FAITH IN YUH---AN' I'M SURE YUH'LL GIT A CHANCE AT REVENGE AGAINST THAT WOLF-HOUND! AN' THE NEXT TIME, I PROMISE I'LL LET YUH FIGHT IT OUT TUH THE FINISH!

9 ON THE CLIFF ABOVE THE ARROYO...

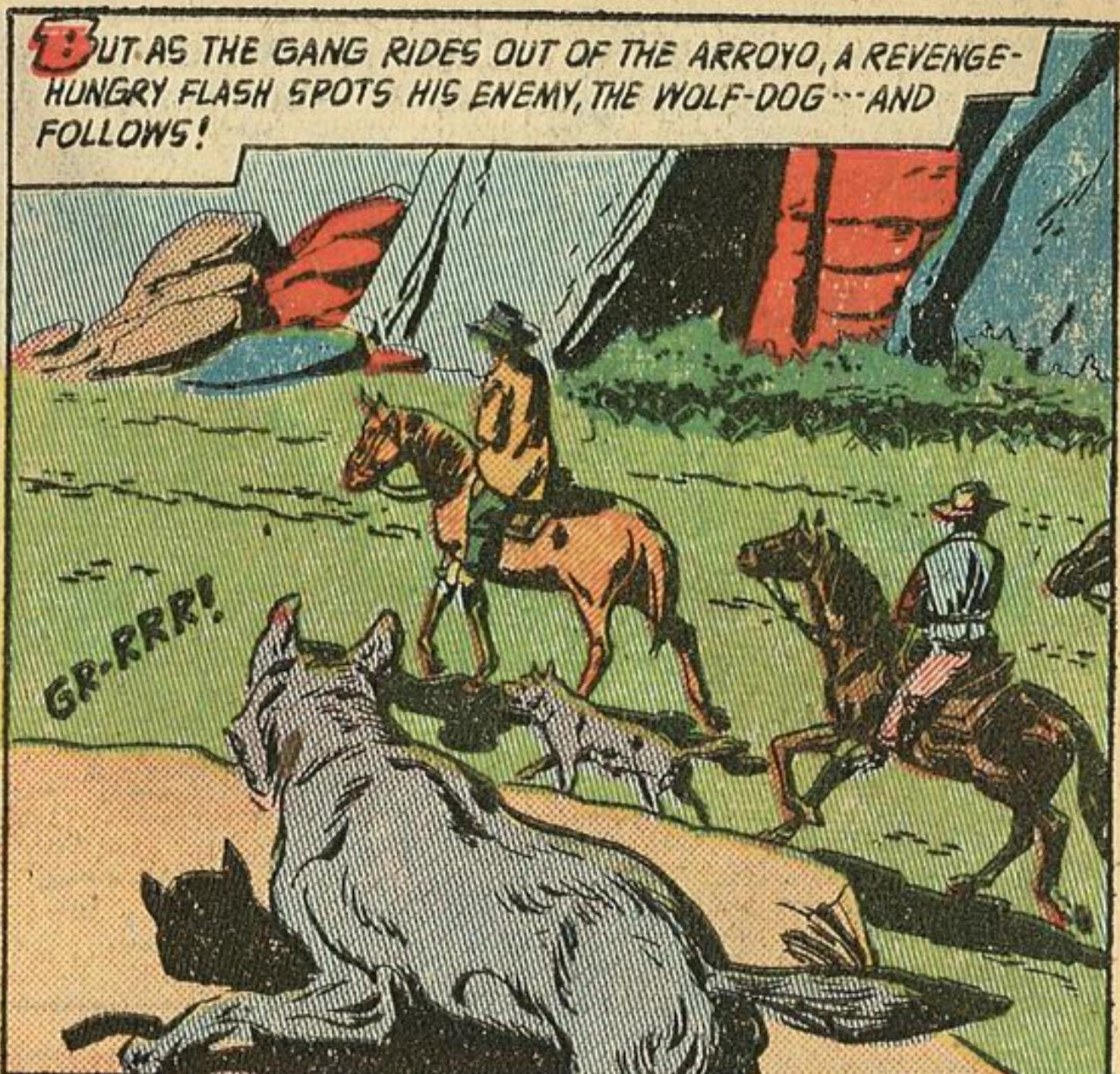
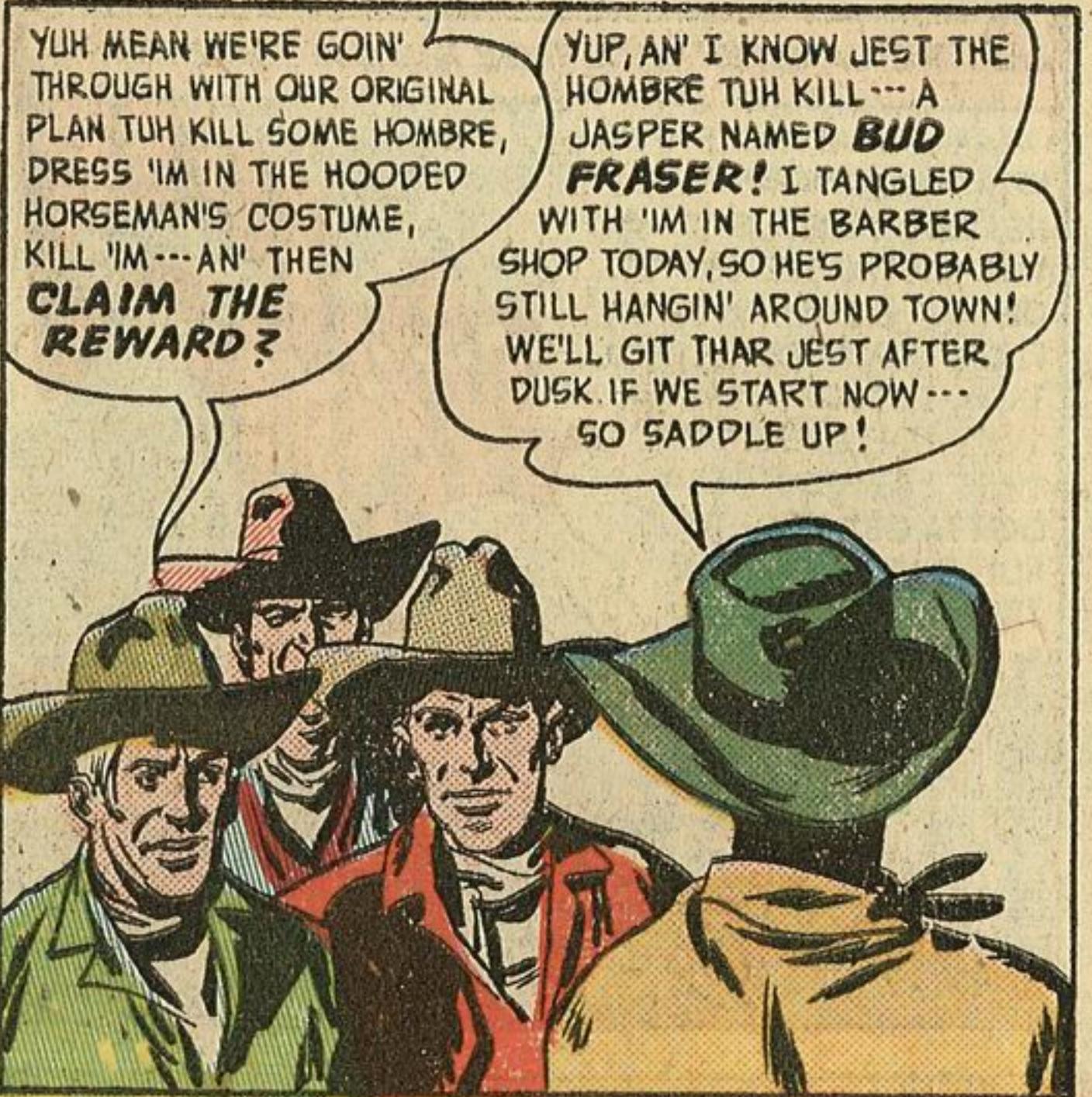
NOW YUH'D BETTER STAY HERE IN THE BRUSH---WHILE I GO BACK TUH TOWN AS BUD FRASER! I'LL TRY TUH FIND OUT WHAR DIAMOND JIM IS LIKELY TUH STRIKE---SO THAT WE'LL BE READY FER THEM!

LATER, DOWN IN DIAMOND JIM'S CAMP...

HIYA, BOYS... I GOT GOOD NEWS! I TALKED THE TOWNSMEN INTUH IN-CREASIN' THE REWARD FER THE HOODED HORSEMAN TUH **FIFTY THOUSAND!**

WE GOT BAD NEWS FER YUH, BOSS --- THE REAL HOODED HORSEMAN WAS HERE!

SO HE'S ON TUH US, EH? WAL, I'D FIGGERED ON PULLIN' A FEW MORE HOLDUPS AFORE CASHIN' IN ON THAT REWARD MONEY, BUT NOW I RECKON WE'LL HAVE TUH GIT THAT FIFTY GRAND FAST---AFORE THE TOWNSMEN FIND OUT THAR ARE **TWO** HOODED HORSEMEN!



THAT KICK RAISED A WUMP ON HIS HEAD AS BIG AS AN EGG, BOSS... THE MASK DOESN'T FIT OVER IT!

BLAST IT... THAT MEANS WE'LL HAVE TUH MAKE ONE MORE RAID! THE ONLY PLACE WHAR WE KIN GIT MORE RED CLOTH TUH MAKE ANOTHER MASK IS THE GENERAL STORE... AN' SINCE IT'S CLOSED NOW, WE'LL HAVE TUH **BUST** INTUH IT! TIE AN' GAG FRASER... WE'LL LEAVE THE HOUND TUH GUARD 'IM IN THE ALLEY WHILE WE'RE GONE!

BUT MINUTES LATER, FLASH FOLLOWS THE SCENT OF HIS CANINE ENEMY TO THE DARK ALLEYWAY... WHERE ANOTHER SCENT IS WAFTED HIS WAY... THAT OF HIS ENDANGERED MASTER! AND AS THE WOLF-DOG SNARLS AROUND BUD'S HELPLESS BODY, A FIERCE, CHALLENGING GROWL BURSTS FROM FLASH'S THROAT...

GR-RAGHH!

THE WOLF-DOG WHIRLS, RETURNS THE CHALLENGE... AND THE TWO BEASTS MEET IN DEADLY COMBAT BEFORE THE EYES OF THE NOW CONSCIOUS BUD!

BUT THIS TIME FLASH IS FIGHTING FOR HIS MASTER'S LIFE AS WELL AS HIS OWN... AND SPURRED ON BY THE NEED TO VINDICATE HIMSELF IN BUD'S EYES, FLASH SAVAGELY CLAWS AND RIPS HIS WAY TO VICTORY!

FLASH HAS THE WOLF-DOG'S THROAT IN A DEATH-GRIP... HE DID IT!



THEN, WITH ALMOST HUMAN INTELLIGENCE...

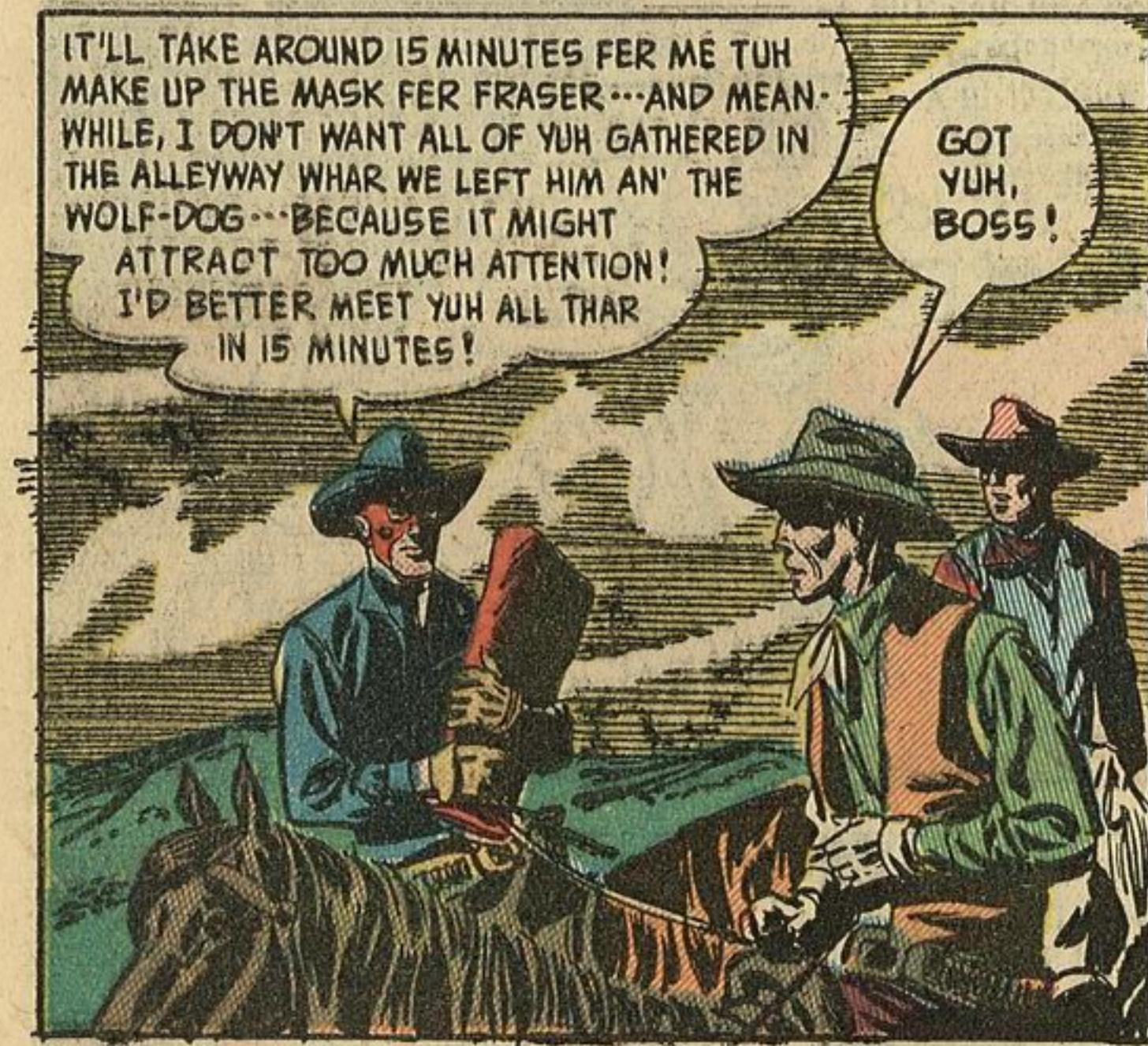
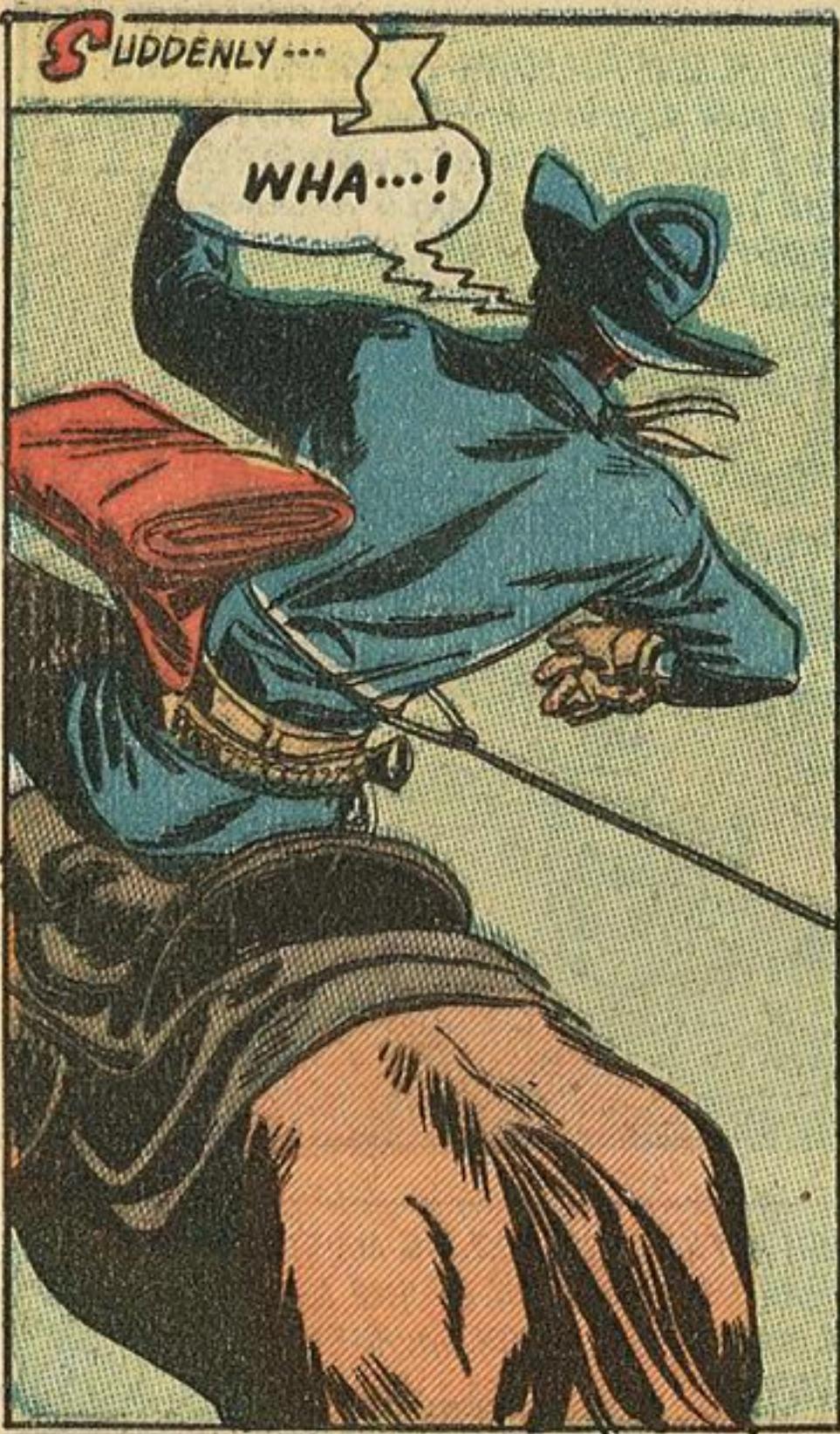
GOOD BOY, FLASH! NOW I'LL PUT ON THE MASK I HAD HIDDEN INSIDE, MUH SHIRT AN' HEAD FER THE SOUND O' THOSE SHOTS... BECAUSE **THAT'S** WHAR I'M SHORE I'LL FIND THE **PHONEY HOODED HORSEMAN!**

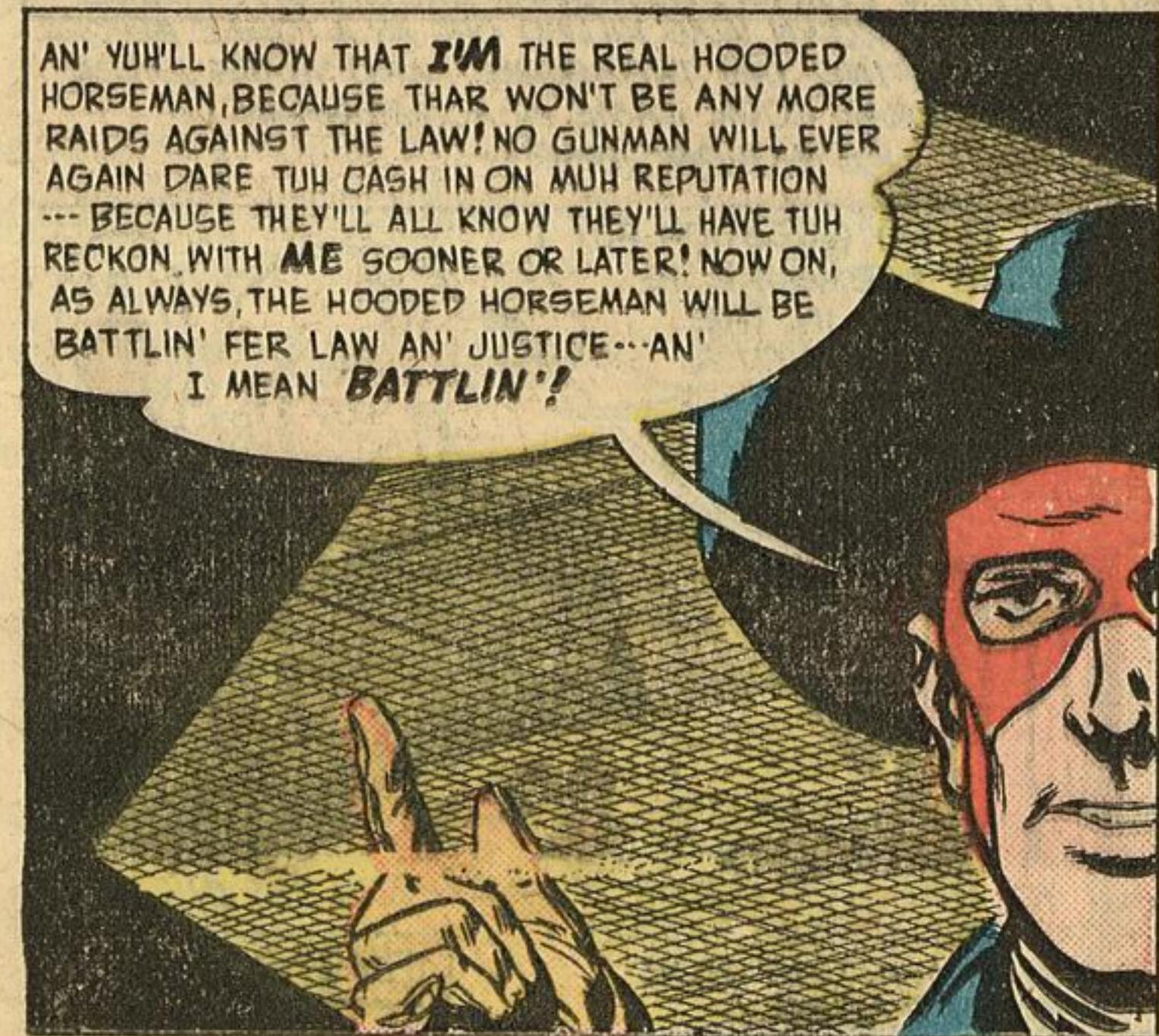
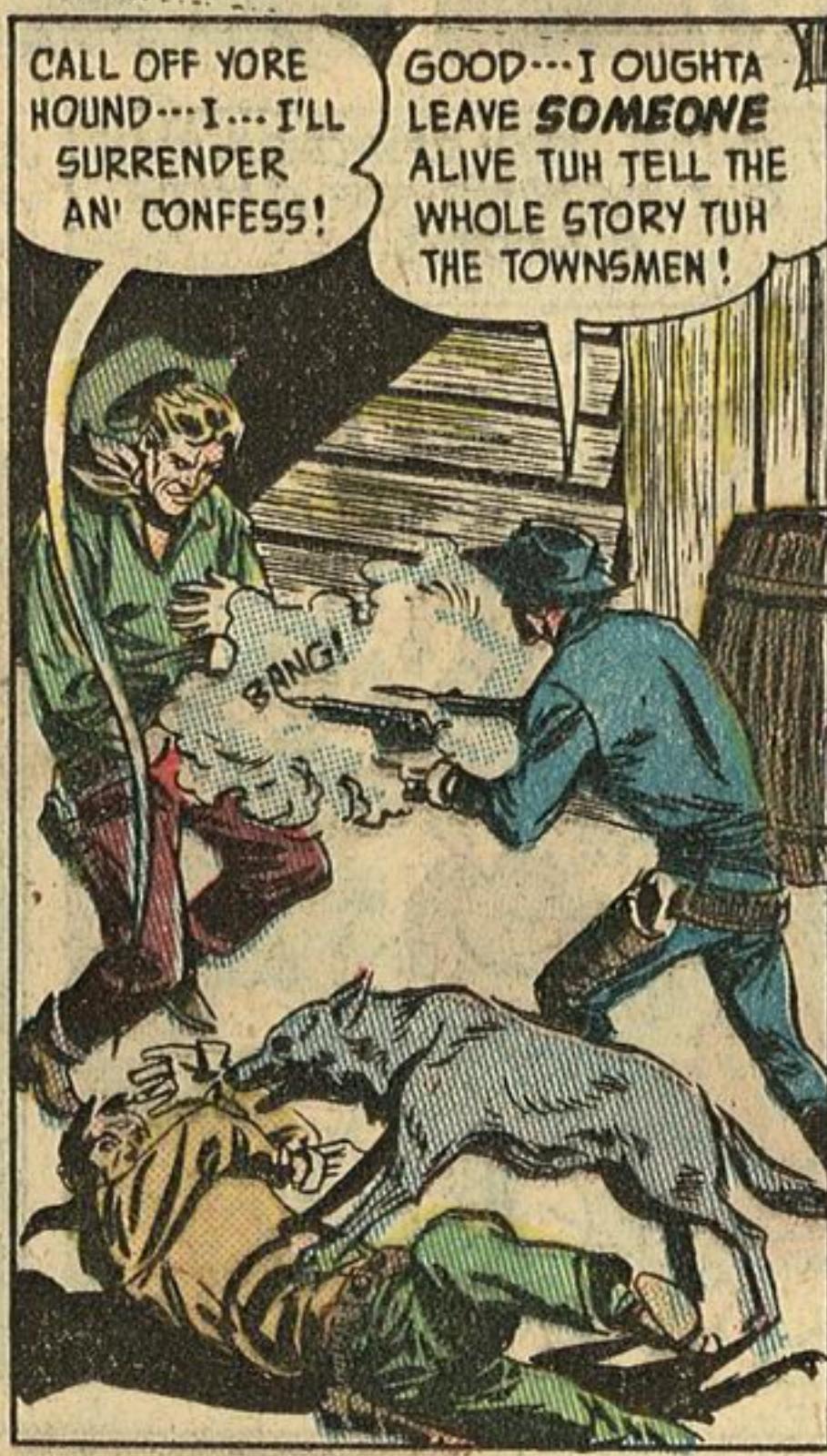
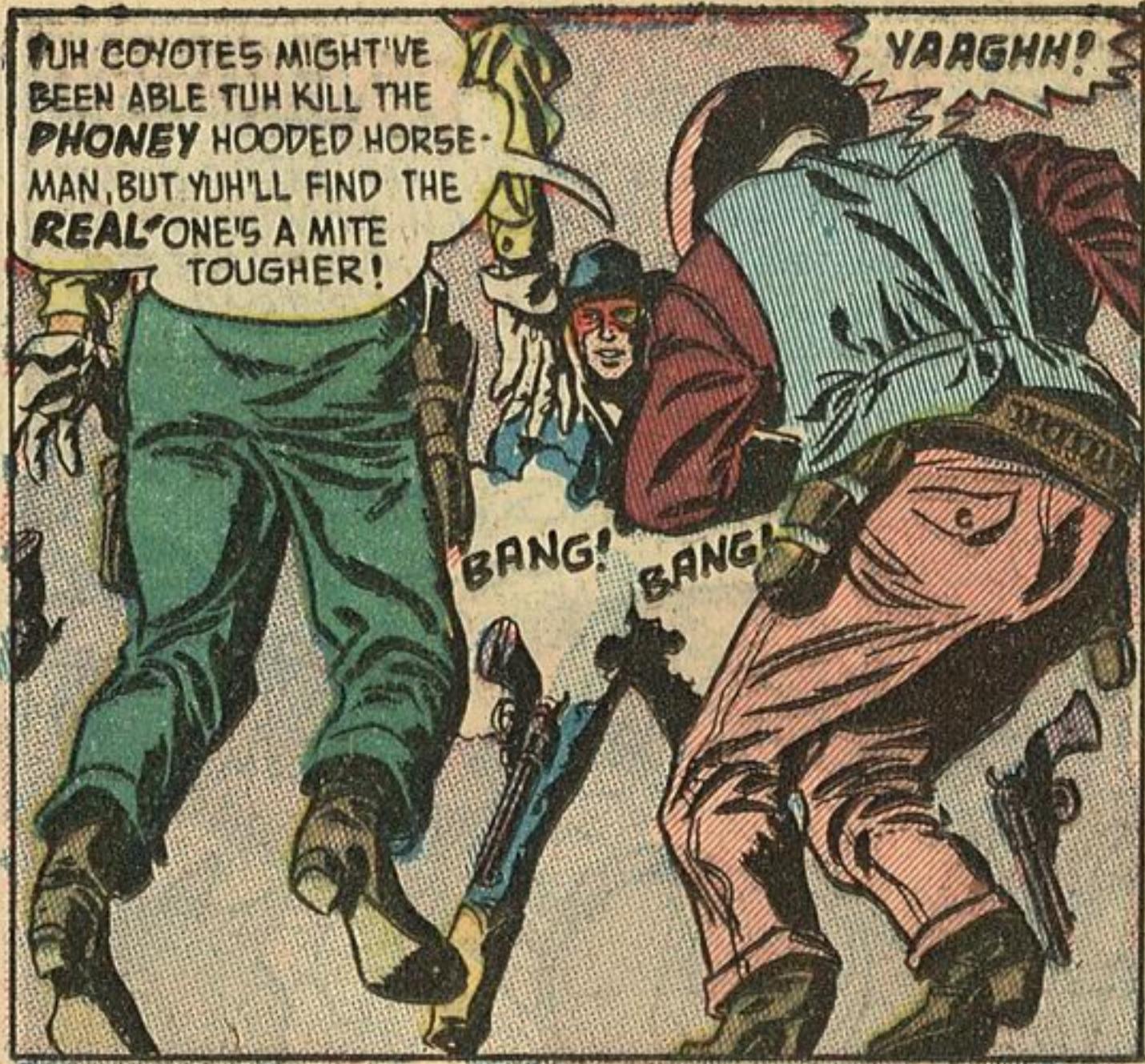
BANG! BANG!

HAW-HAW, JEST LOOK AT THOSE YELLOW-LIVERED HOMBRES COWERIN' THAR... THEY'RE SO AFRAID O' THE HOODED HORSEMAN THAT THEY WON'T EVEN SWAP LEAD WITH ME! GO ON, BOYS... I'LL COVER YORE GETAWAY!

BANG! BANG!







Buried WESTERN TREASURE

ONE OF THE MOST NOTORIOUS OUTLAW GANGS OF THE 1860'S WAS LED BY JOHN AND JIM REYNOLDS -- A BAND OF 24 MEN WHO ATTACKED AND PLUNDERED WAGON TRAINS ON THE SANTA FE TRAIL!



HAVING GATHERED AN UNTOLD FORTUNE IN GOLD DUST, THE BANDITS RODE DOWN THE NORTH FORK OF THE SOUTH PLATTE AND CAMPED IN A THICK GROVE OF PINE TREES NEAR THE MOUTH OF GENEVA CREEK!

A DOZEN DIFFERENT POSSES ARE SCOURIN' THE WOODS FER US! WE'D BETTER GO UP THE CREEK AND BURY ALL THIS LOOT -- WE KIN COME BACK FER IT WHEN THE HEAT'S OFF!

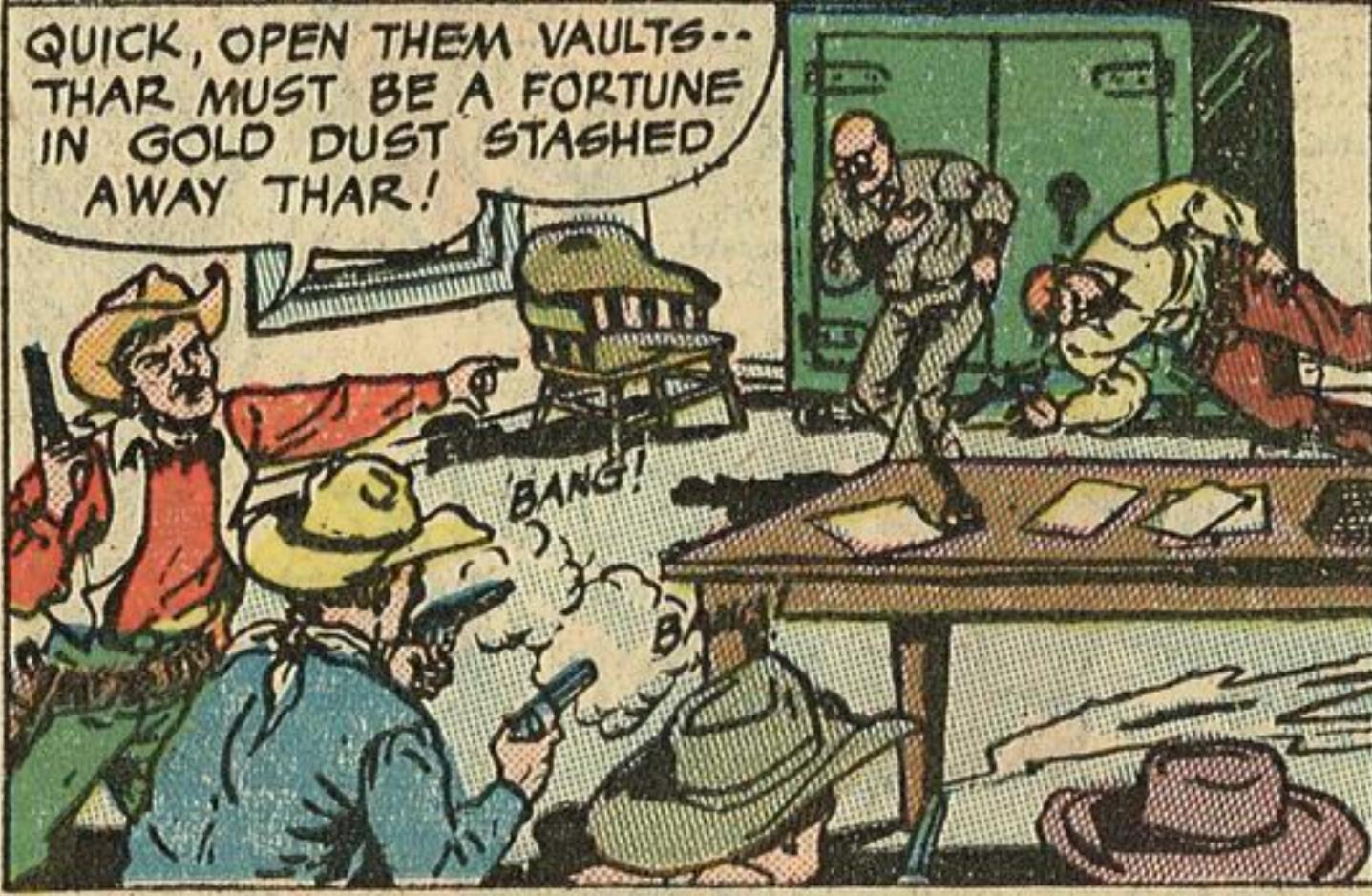


BROWN SHOT THE MOUNTAINEER -- BUT REYNOLDS WAS MORTALLY WOUNDED! AS HE LAY DYING, REYNOLDS REVEALED THE SECRET OF THE BURIED TREASURE!

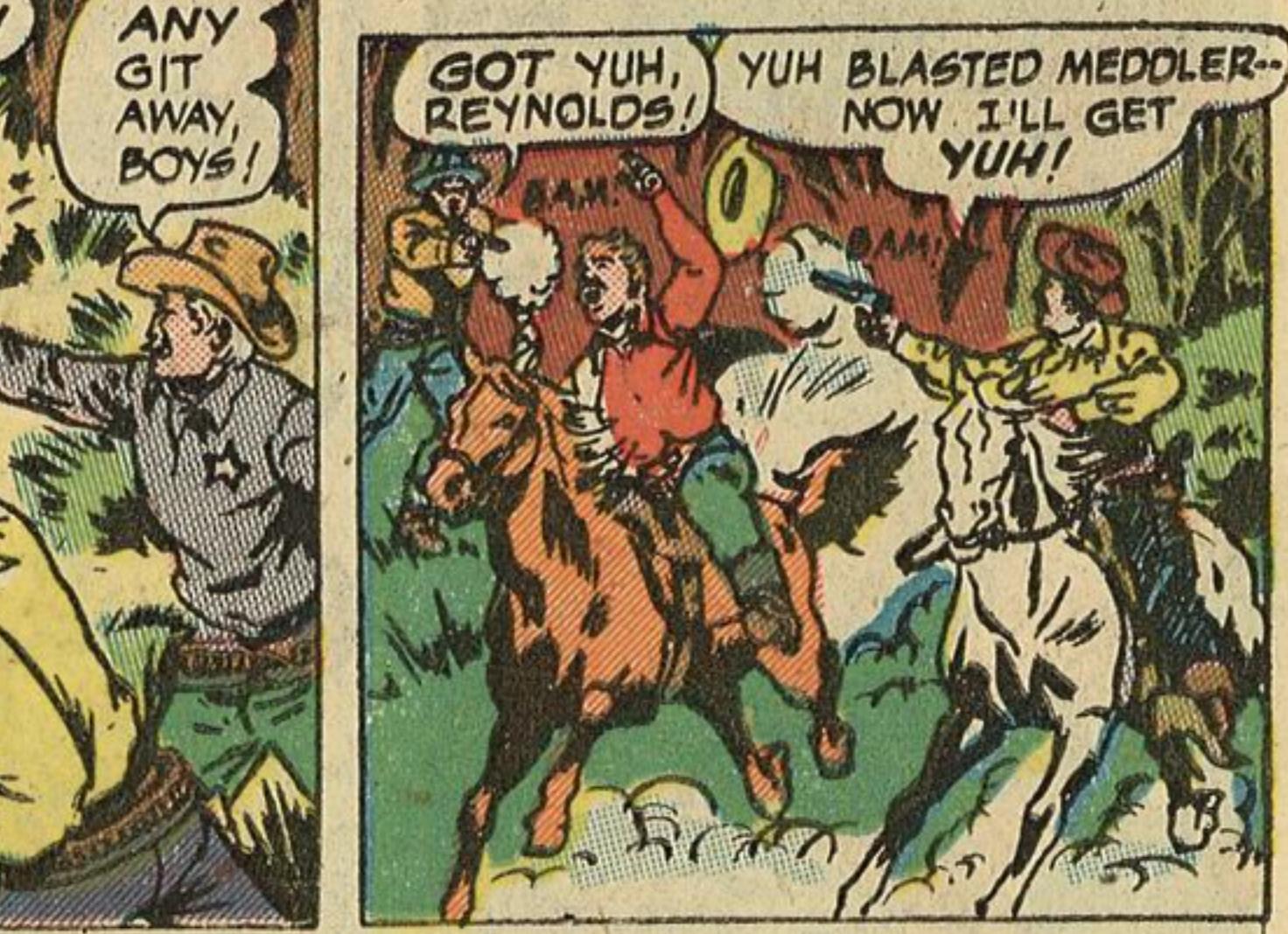
YUH GO UP A LITTLE WAYS ALONG GENEVA CREEK -- AN' AT THE HEAD O' THE GULCH, TURN TUH THE RIGHT AN' FOLLOW THE MOUNTAIN AROUND TUH THE HEAD O' DEER CREEK! I... I BURIED ALL THE GOLD DUST AND THE \$40,000 IN GREENBACKS, WRAPPED IN SILK OIL CLOTH, IN AN OLD PROSPECT HOLE AT ABOUT TIMBERLINE! THEN I FILLED THE HOLE UP WITH STONES... STUCK AN OLD BUTCHER KNIFE IN A TREE ABOUT 4 FEET FROM THE GROUND, BROKE THE HANDLE OFF, AN' LEFT IT POINTIN' TUH THE MOUTH OF THE HOLE!



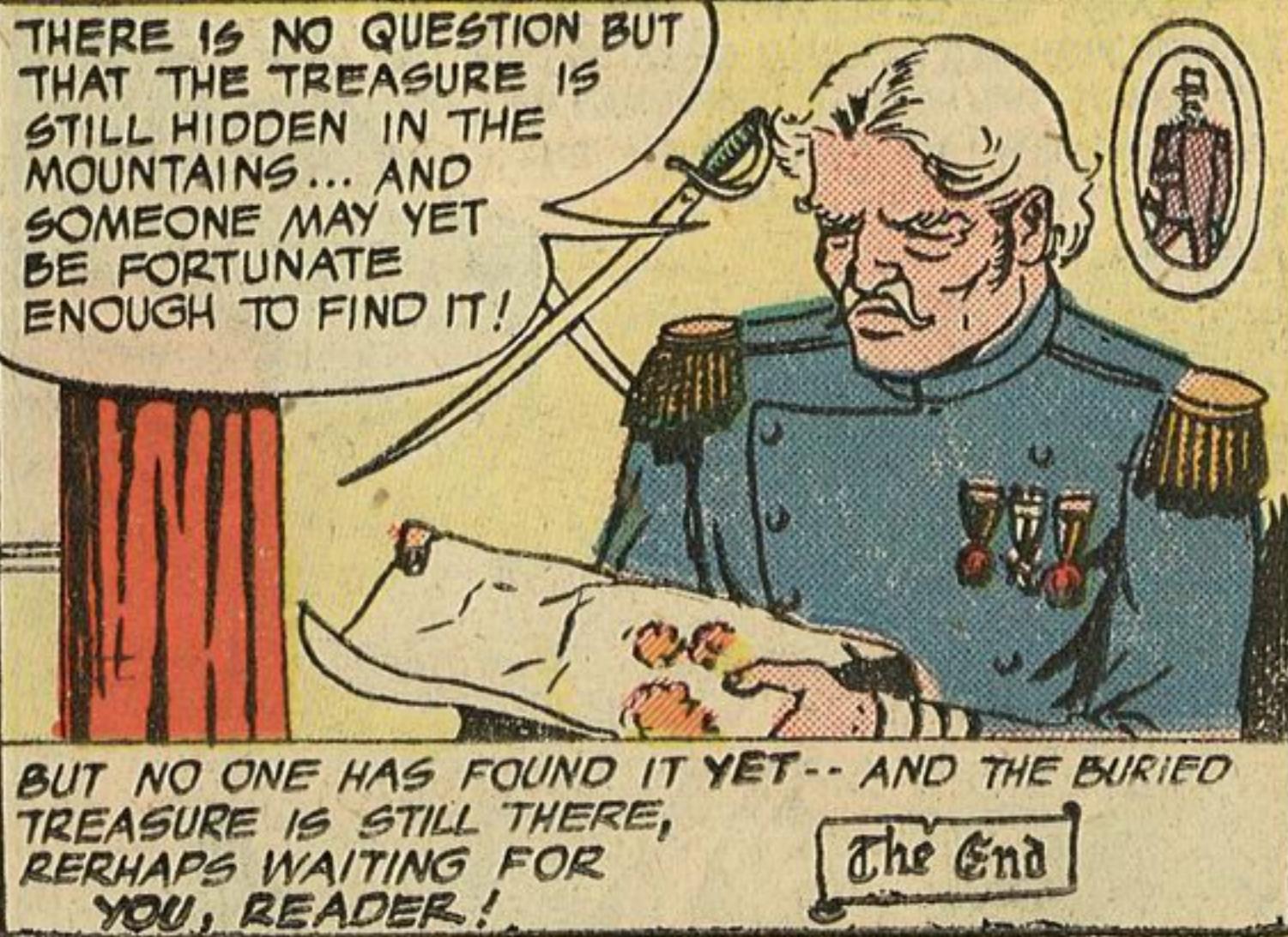
WITH A LOOT OF \$40,000 IN CURRENCY AND OVER \$10,000 IN GOLD DUST, THE BANDITS RODE UP THE ARKANSAS, WAYLAYING TRAVELERS, ROBBING RANCHERS, AND HOLDING UP STAGECOACHES -- AND THEN, IN SOUTH PARK, COLORADO. THE REYNOLDS GANG MADE THEIR BIGGEST HAUL AS THEY SMASHED THEIR WAY INTO A WELLS FARGO STAGE STATION!



JOHN REYNOLDS ALONE ESCAPED -- BUT MONTHS LATER, WHEN HE WAS RETURNING TO DIG UP THE TREASURE WITH ANOTHER DESPERADO NAMED BROWN, A MOUNTAINEER RECOGNIZED THE FAMED OUTLAW!



WITH A FINAL EFFORT, REYNOLDS SKETCHED A CRUDE MAP -- BUT BROWN WAS KILLED OFF BY A POSSE BEFORE HE COULD FIND THE TREASURE! AND YEARS LATER, WHEN GENERAL COOK CAME IN POSSESSION OF REYNOLDS' MAP --



BUT NO ONE HAS FOUND IT YET -- AND THE BURIED TREASURE IS STILL THERE, PERHAPS WAITING FOR YOU, READER!

The End

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NOT SOLD IN STORES



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THE PERFECT SHOT

"SHERIFF, YUH CAN'T go through with this!" one of the townsmen said violently. "Yuh know that Killer Barton's faster on the draw than yuh are...yuh'll jest end up, as another notch on that coyote's .44!"

A murmur of assent ran around the group of ranchers and townsmen crowded into Sheriff Rusty Miller's small office. The sheriff had been hearing talk like this for the last half-hour, ever since Killer Barton had sent in the message that he'd be waiting for Rusty Miller at the edge of town at dusk...and if Miller didn't show up, the message added, Barton and his gang would shoot up and burn all the outlying, isolated ranch-houses.

But now the sheriff was tired of hearing all the words of caution from the townsmen, and standing up and glaring at them, he said, "I'm a-goin' out thar...an' that's all thar is tuh it! We don't have a big enough posse in town tuh tangle with Barton's gang...so whether it's suicide or not, I'm gonna meet 'im alone! If I win, mebbe his gang'll break up an' scatter...an' if I lose, mebbe Barton'll be satisfied an' leave without botherin' them outlyin' ranchers. An' now ... clear outa here ... all of yuh!"

The townsmen reluctantly shuffled out, closing the door behind them...and the sheriff took down his twin holsters from the wall and buckled them around his waist. As he hefted the two long-barreled .44's in his hands, a flood of remembrance swept over him. These were the guns he had used in his youth, when he had trailed along with his dad's two-bit carnival. It was his father, a famous marksman in his day, who had taught Rusty how to draw and shoot...just as he had taught Rusty's friend, Hank Barton.

The two of them, Rusty and Hank, had become two of the best shots in the West, putting on trick shooting performances for

the carny. But Hank had always been a shade faster than Rusty...as he proved the day he held up the carnival, stole the whole season's receipts, killed Rusty's dad...and outdrew Rusty himself, shooting the guns right out of his hands. After that, Barton became Killer Barton, head of a gang of ruthless gunmen...while Rusty went on to become a sheriff, always proclaiming that he would get his father's killer some day.

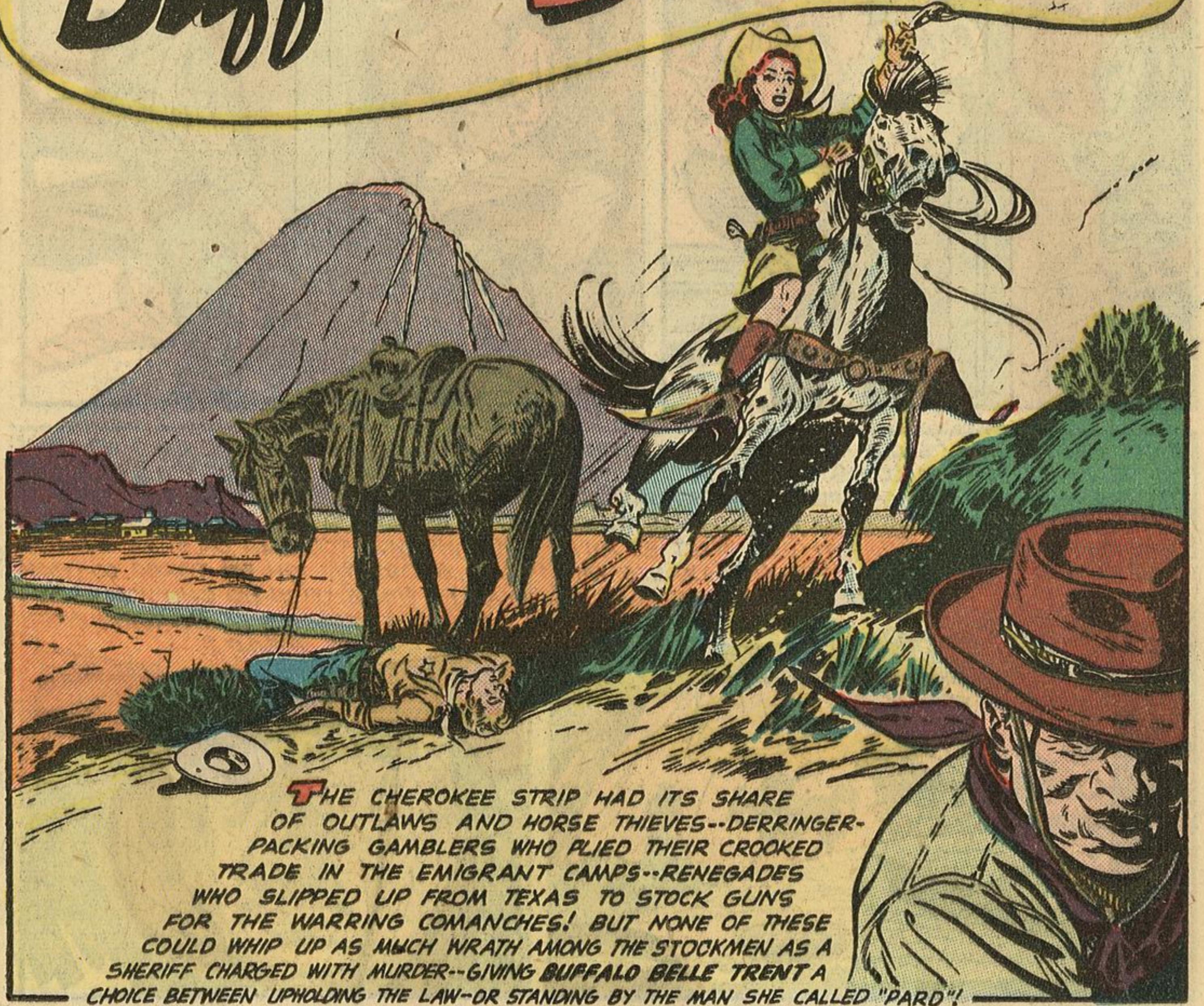
And the proclamations had worked...for apparently Barton had heard of them, and had returned to challenge the sheriff...which was just what Rusty had been praying for.

An hour later, as the sun dipped over the western horizon, Sheriff Rusty Miller rode grimly to meet the killer who was waiting for him.

"Start drawin' any time yuh want tuh, sheriff," Barton called as soon as they got within shouting distance. Rusty didn't answer him, but drew slowly nearer...nearer. When the two men were within .44 shooting range, and Rusty still hadn't drawn, Barton sneered, "What's the matter, sheriff...don't yuh trust yore eyesight or yore .44's anymore?"

Rusty merely kept on riding closer, closer...and when the two men were a scant twenty paces apart, the sheriff saw a frown of suspicion cross Barton's face. That was when Rusty made his move, darting his hand down to his gun. A brief moment later, two guns barked...but it was Barton who slumped to the ground, a bullet in his heart. And as Barton's demoralized gunmen broke and scattered, Rusty said grimly to the dead man, "Thanks fer lettin' me git intuh .38 shootin' distance, yuh varmint! Yuh see, I didn't use muh long-barreled .44's, but a short-barreled .38...because a short barrel draws a shade faster'n a long one...jest enough tuh shade yuh!"

Buffalo BELLE



THE CHEROKEE STRIP HAD ITS SHARE OF OUTLAWS AND HORSE THIEVES--DERRINGER-PACKING GAMBLERS WHO PLIED THEIR CROOKED TRADE IN THE EMIGRANT CAMPS--RENEGADES WHO SLIPPED UP FROM TEXAS TO STOCK GUNS FOR THE WARRING COMANCHES! BUT NONE OF THESE COULD WHIP UP AS MUCH WRATH AMONG THE STOCKMEN AS A SHERIFF CHARGED WITH MURDER--GIVING BUFFALO BELLE TRENT A CHOICE BETWEEN UPHOLDING THE LAW--OR STANDING BY THE MAN SHE CALLED "PARD"!

ONE NIGHT--OUTSIDE A LONELY RANCH--

WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YUH UP TUH, WHIPLASH? WE'VE HOLED IN BACK IN TOWN FER A WEEK, SPYIN' ON SHERIFF HANLEY--AN' NOW YUH'RE FIXIN' TUH PLUG OL' PETE GARNET!

DON'T KNOW WHO THAT COULD BE! BUT LEASTWISE THIS ISN'T LIKE THE OLD DAYS--WHEN YUH NEEDED A GUN IN YORE HAND EVERY TIME YUH OPENED YORE DOOR!



IN THE NEXT INSTANT--UNARMED AND WITH A SMILE OF WELCOME FROZEN ON HIS FACE--



I DUNNO ABOUT THIS, WHIPLASH! WE RODE INTUH THE CHEROKEE STRIP FER RUSTLIN' --NOT COLD-BLOODED MURDER!



CAN'T FIGGER WHY YUH'RE ASKIN' FER TROUBLE, WHIPLASH--AFTER SAYIN' WHAT A TOUGH HOMBRE SHERIFF LUKE HANLEY IS!

SHORE--HE'S PURE PIZEN WHEN IT COMES TUH DEALIN' WITH OUTLAWS--ESPECIALLY WITH A RIPROARIN DEPUTY LIKE BUFFALO BELLE TRENT! THAT'S WHY THAR WON'T BE ANY RUSTLIN' FER US--UNLESS WE DO SOMETHIN' ABOUT HIM FIRST!



MEBBE AMBUSHIN' THE SHERIFF WOULD BE THE EASIEST WAY--BUT IT'D BE A SHORE SIGN THAT OUTLAWRY'S READY TUH POP IN THE CHEROKEE STRIP--AN' THAT'D MEAN PUTTIN' THE STOCKMEN ON THEIR GUARD! BUT S'POSE WE KIN FIX THINGS SO LUKE HANLEY WINDS UP IN HIS OWN HOOSEGOW

--WITH A CHARGE O' MURDER OVER HIS HEAD?



AN HOUR LATER--

THAR THEY COME! YUH TWO KEEP ON THE LOOKOUT--WHILE I DUCK AROUND TUH THE BACK O' THE CAFÉ!



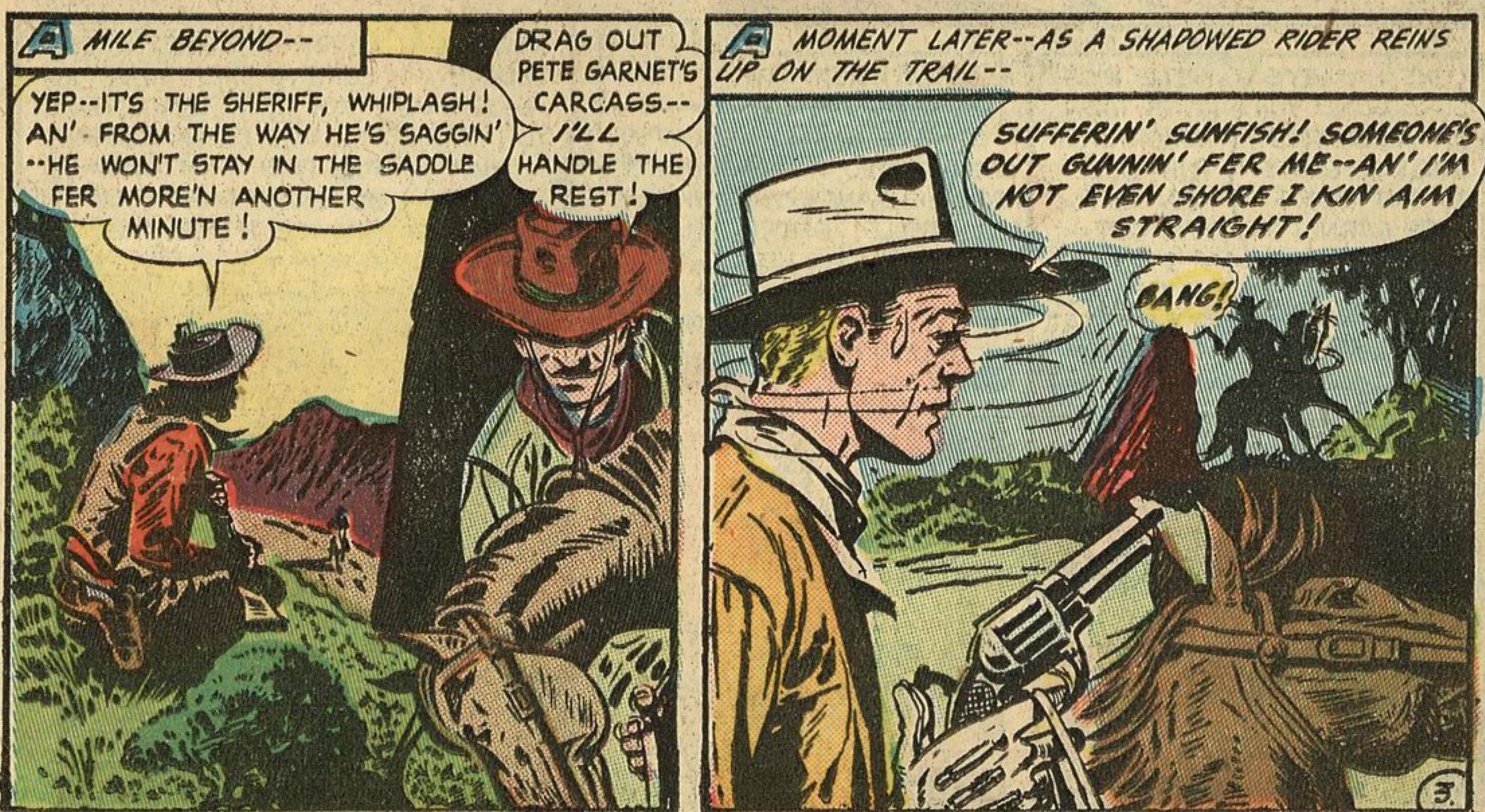
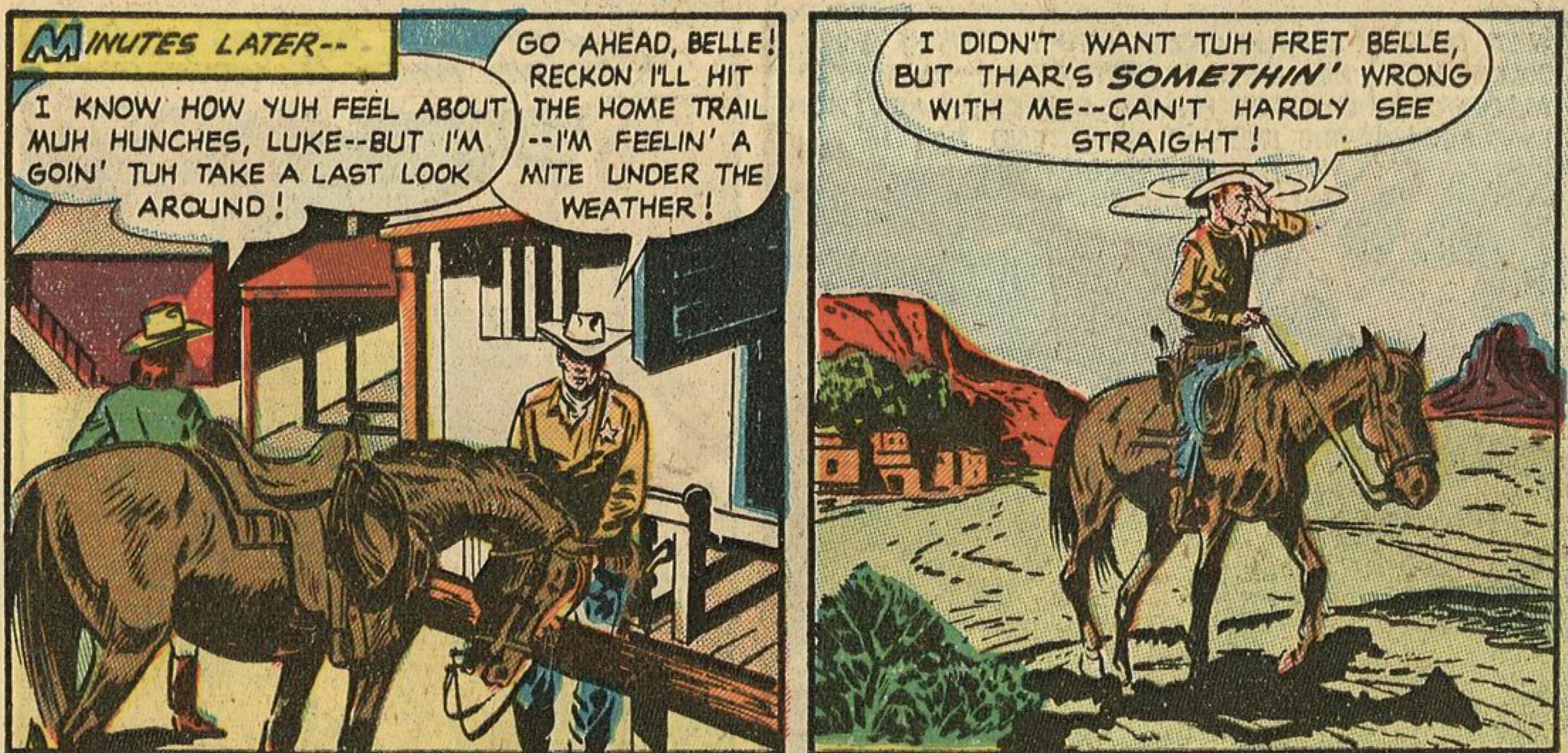
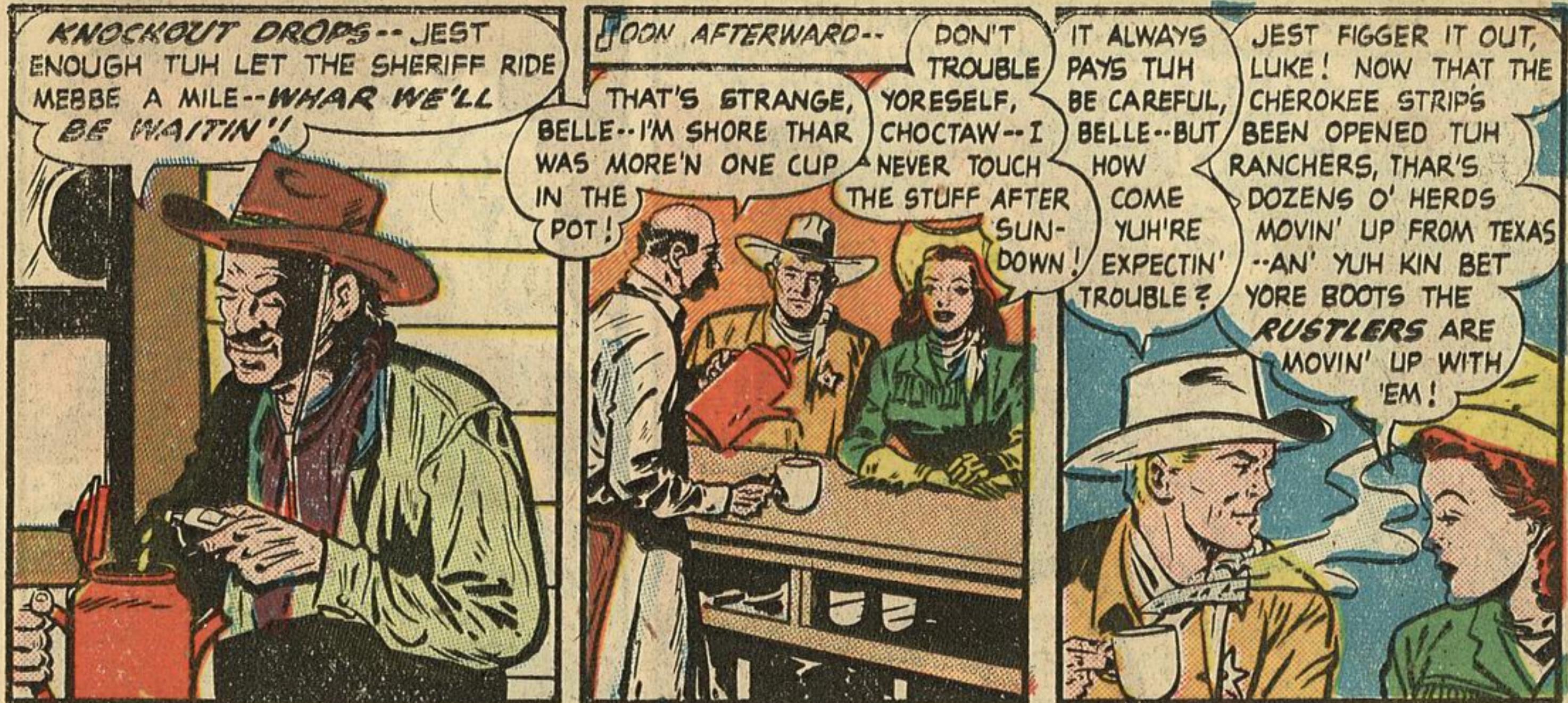
RECKON WE KIN CALL IT A NIGHT, BELLE-- THE TOWN'S PURTY QUIET!

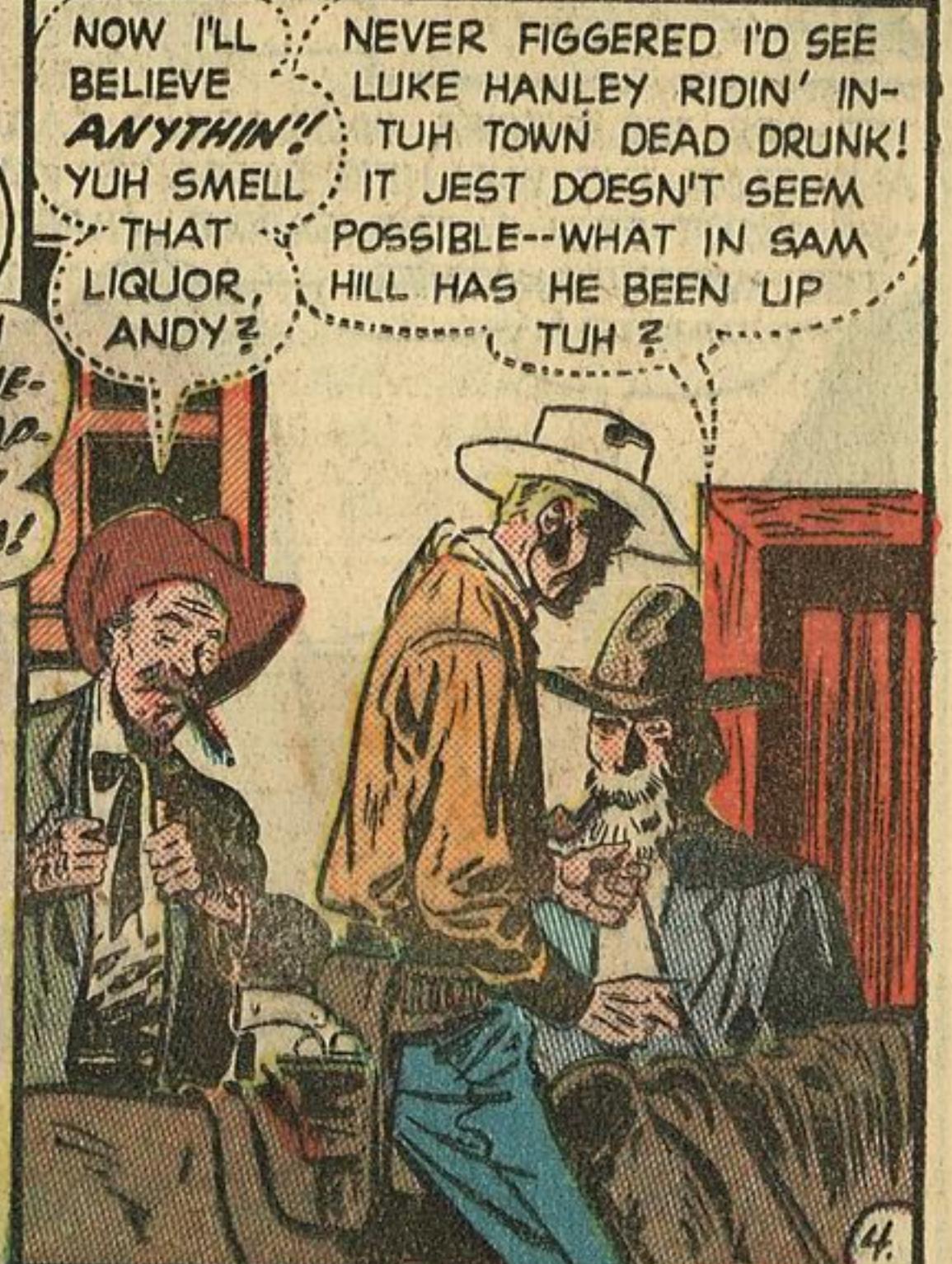
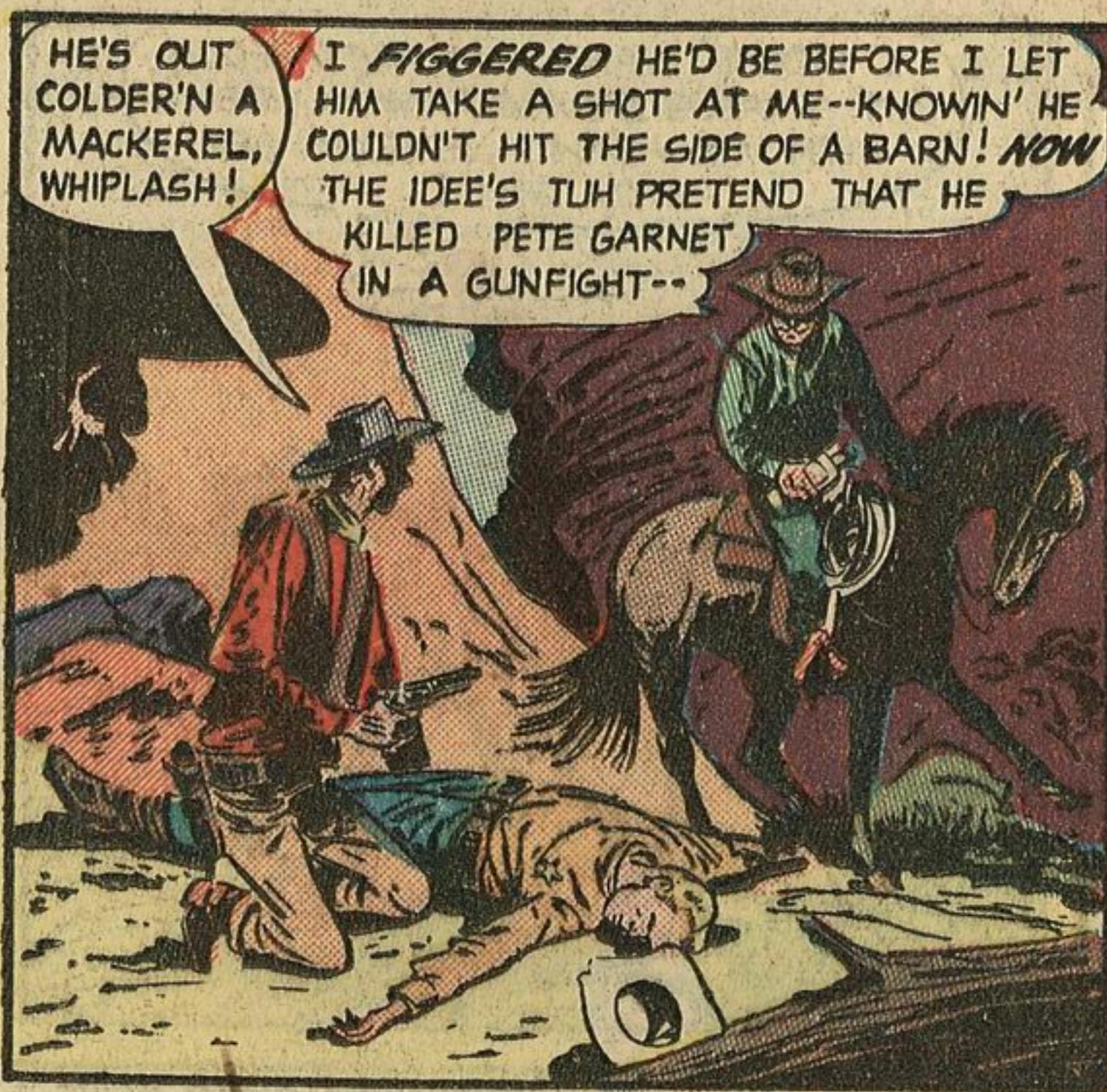
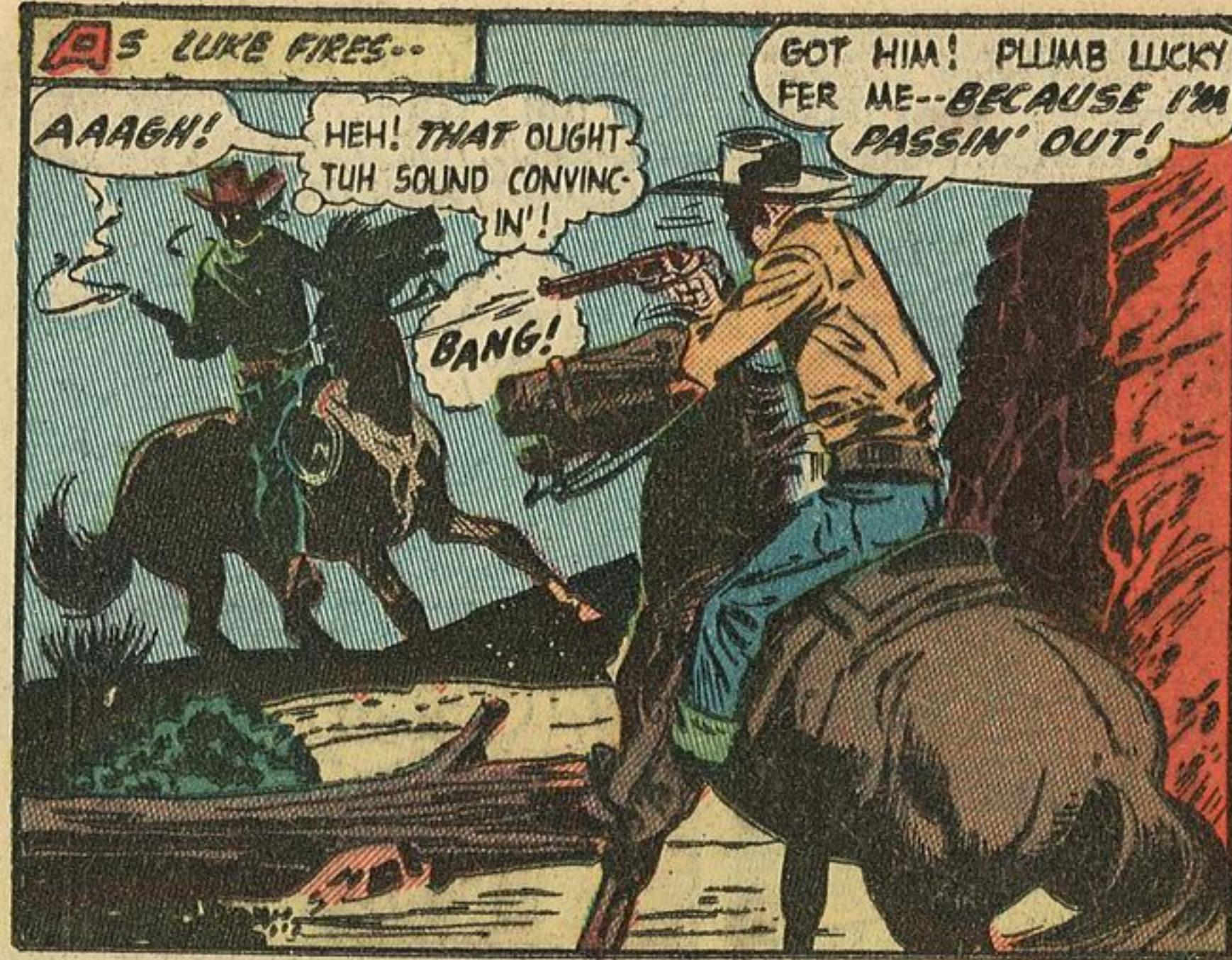


YEP--AN' THAT'S WHAT MAKES ME THINK SOMETHIN'S BREWIN'! WAL-- I'LL TAG ALONG WHILE YUH HAVE YORE USUAL CUP O' COFFEE AT THE CAFÉ, LUKE!

I'LL POUR OUT MOST O' THIS BREW --AN' LEAVE JEST ENOUGH FER ONE CUP! THAT WAY--THAR WON'T BE ANYONE ELSE DRINKIN' THE STUFF I AIM TUH GIT INSIDE O' LUKE HANLEY!









I DON'T RIGHTLY KNOW WHAT HAPPENED, LUKE--BUT THAT'S THE ONLY REASON WHY YUH'RE BEHIND BARS--SO'S I KIN FIND OUT!

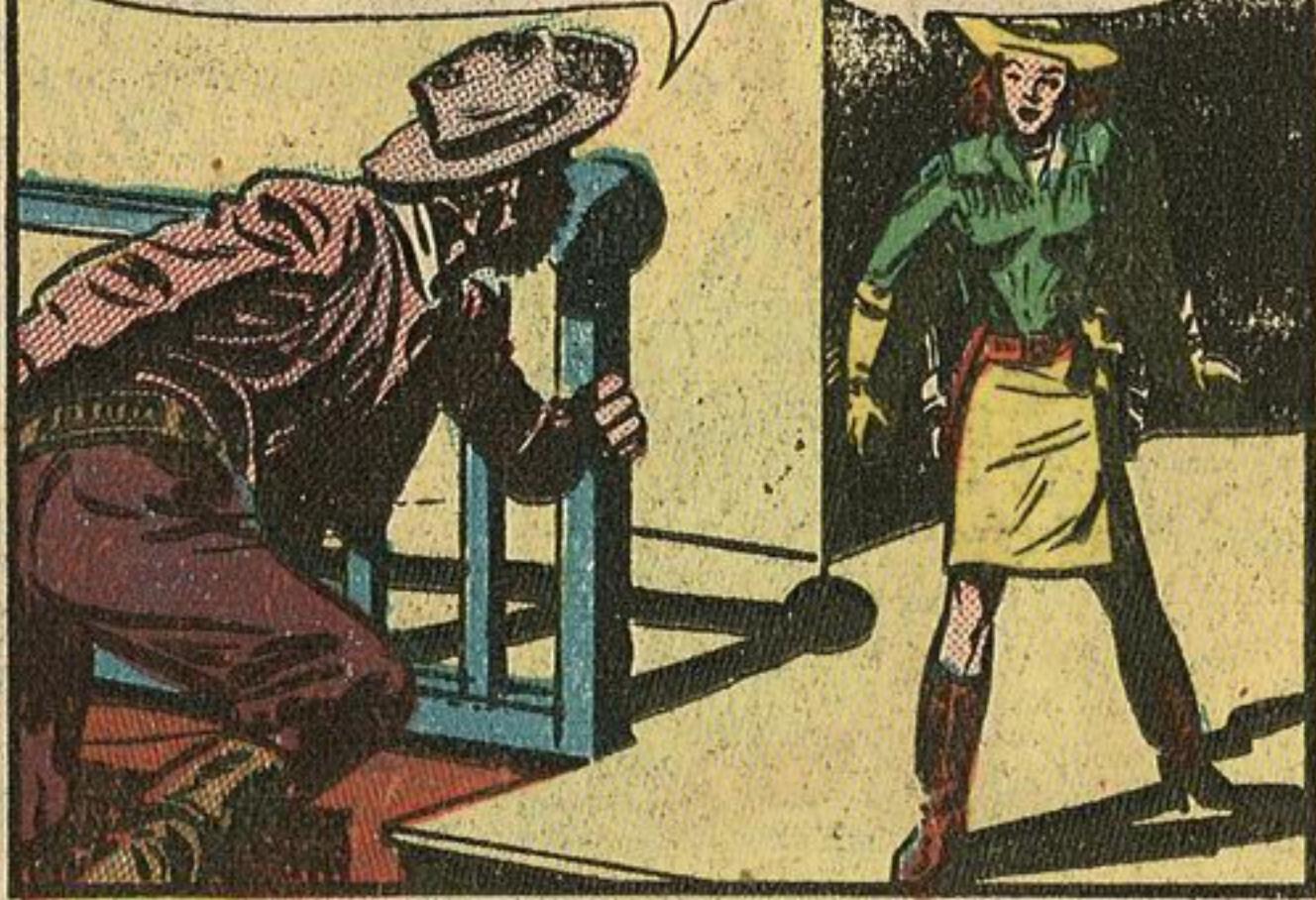
BELLE, YUH DON'T SAWY WHAT THIS MEANS TUH ME! THIS HERE'S THE TIME WHEN A WADDY NEEDS A PARD--

AN' I'VE GOT ONE!

A MOMENT LATER--

YUH'VE GOT A RUCKUS ON YORE HANDS, BELLE! THREE O' PETE GARNET'S COWPOKES ARE ON THEIR WAY TUH GIT LUKE!

JUMPIN' JIM-SON! UNLESS I KIN HOLD 'EM--LUKE'S AS GOOD AS TRAPPED!



ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SQUARE--

HOLD ON, HOMBRES--YUH'D BETTER SIMMER DOWN! LUKE HANLEY NEVER DENIED ANY MAN A FAIR TRIAL--AN' YUH'VE GOT TUH DO THE SAME FER HIM!

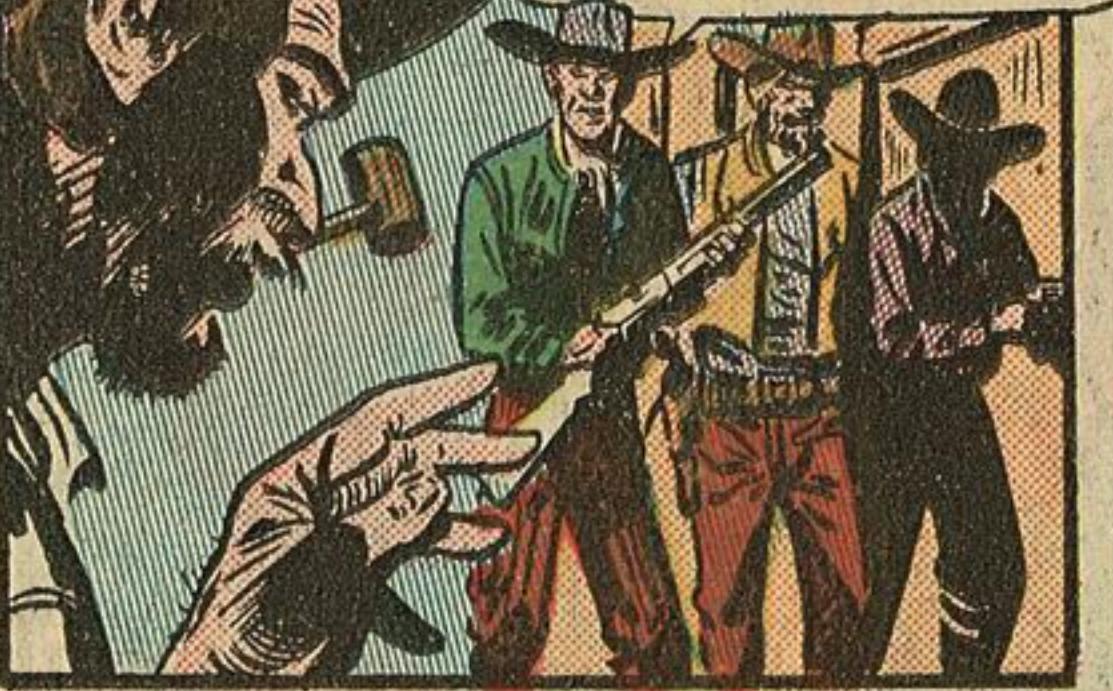
AT THE HOOSEGOW--

GOT THE DOOR CLOSED, EH? THAT WON'T HELP NONE--WE'LL SHOOT AWAY THE LOCK!

THAT'S THE TICKET! WE'LL SHOW BUFFALO BELLE TRENT WE MEAN BUSINESS!

KEEP YORE BAZZOO OUT O' THIS! HE HAD NO CALL TUH PLUG PETE GARNET--AN' HE'S GOIN' TUH PAY!

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!



SUDDENLY--

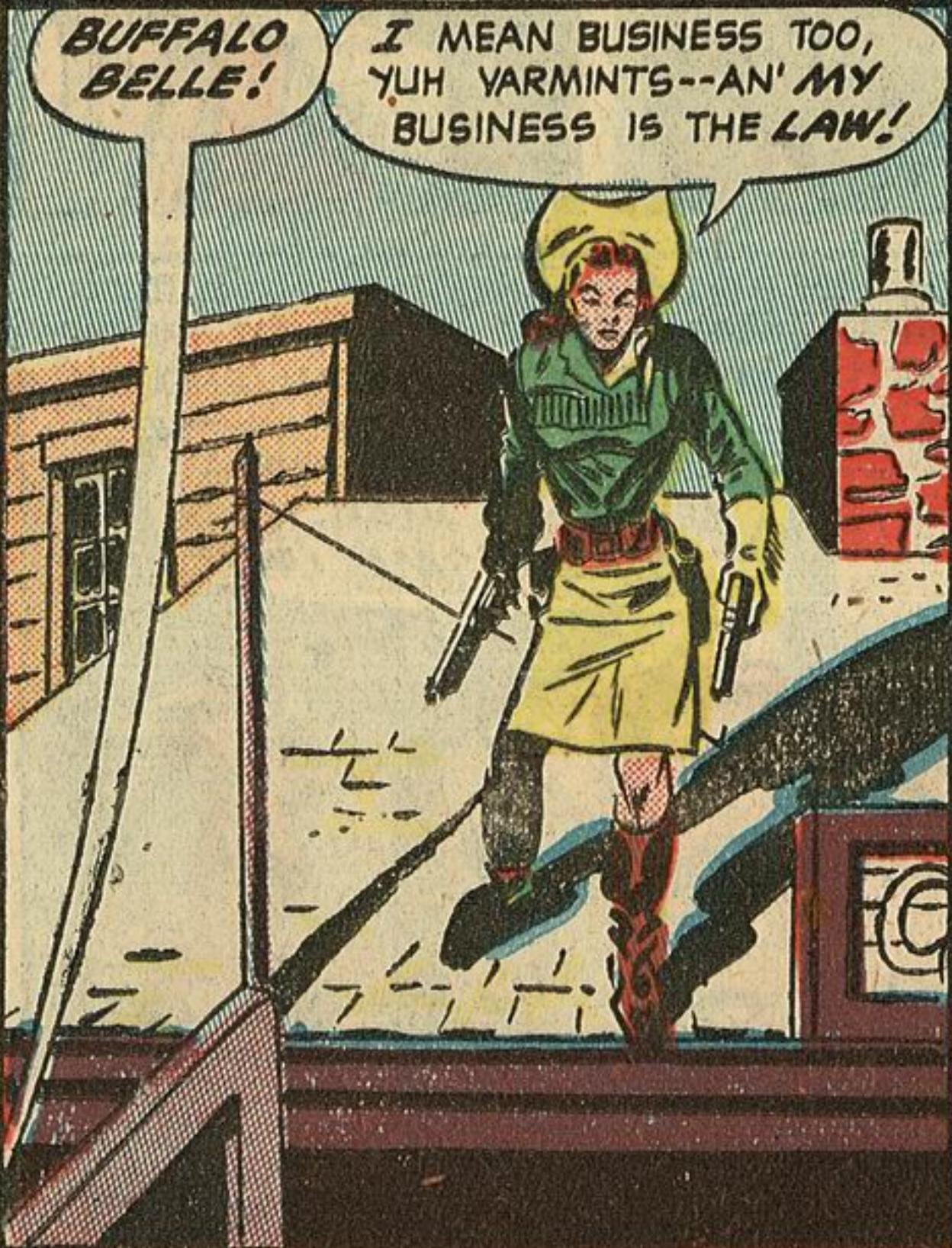


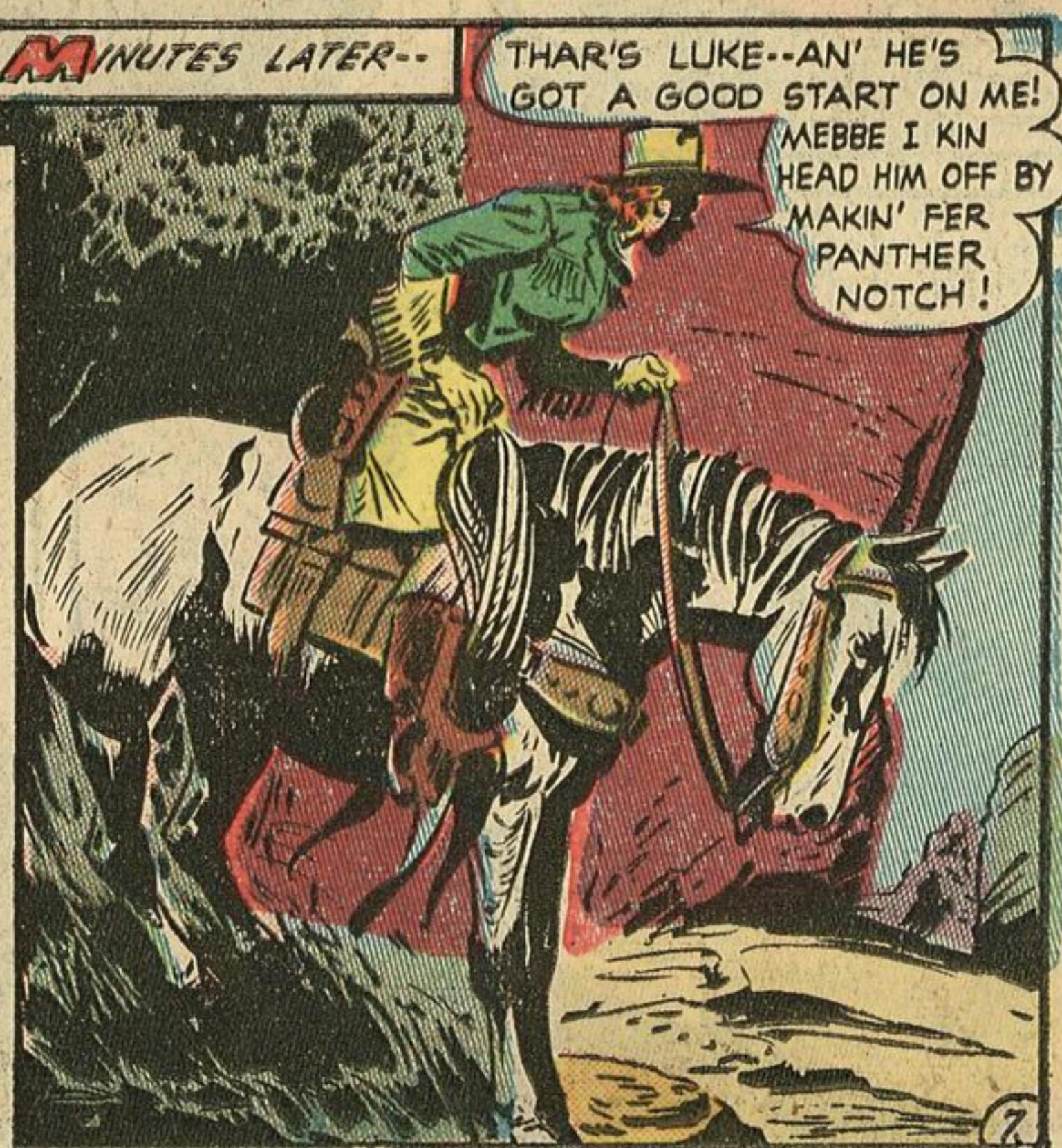
BUFFALO BELLE!

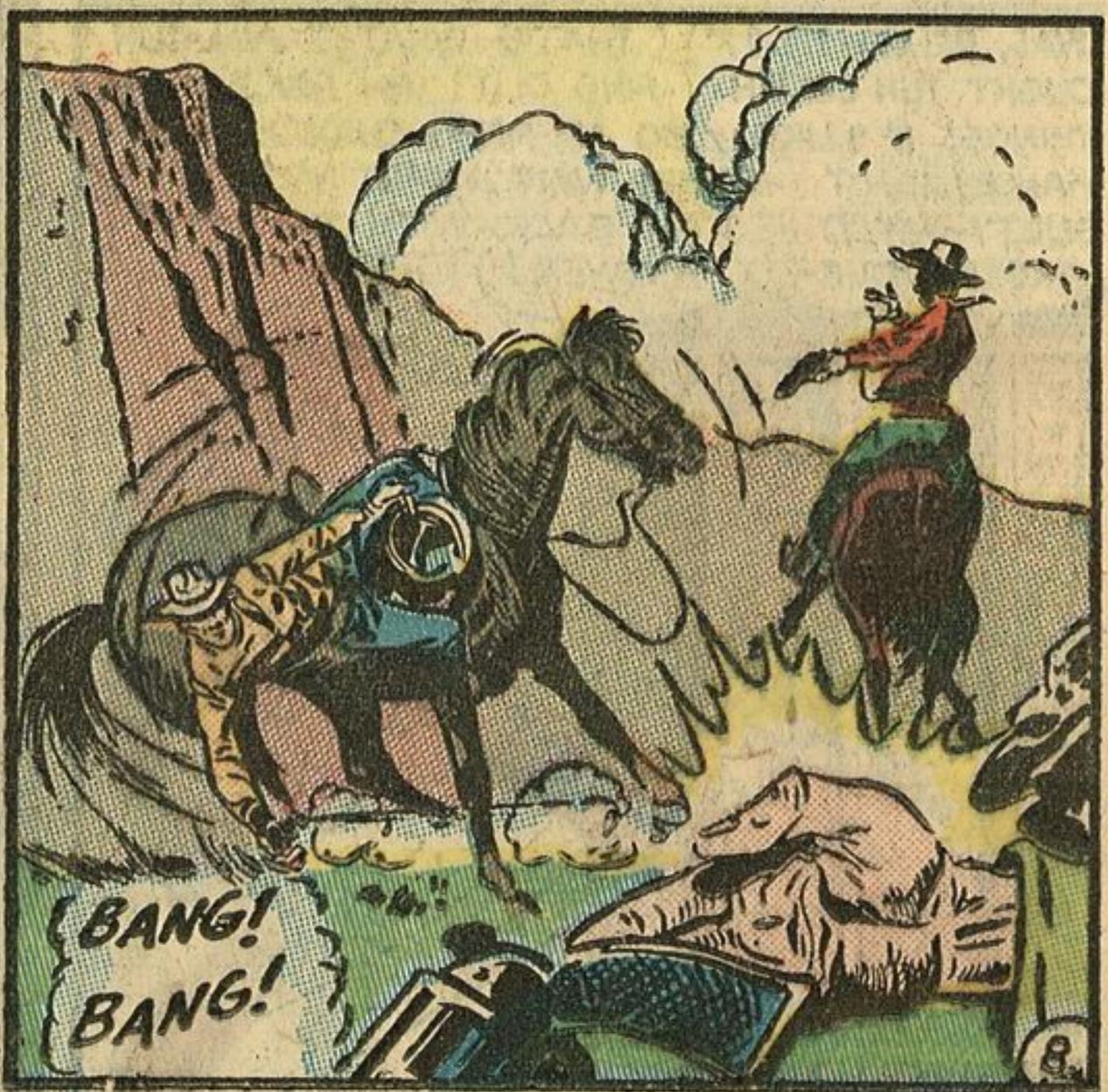
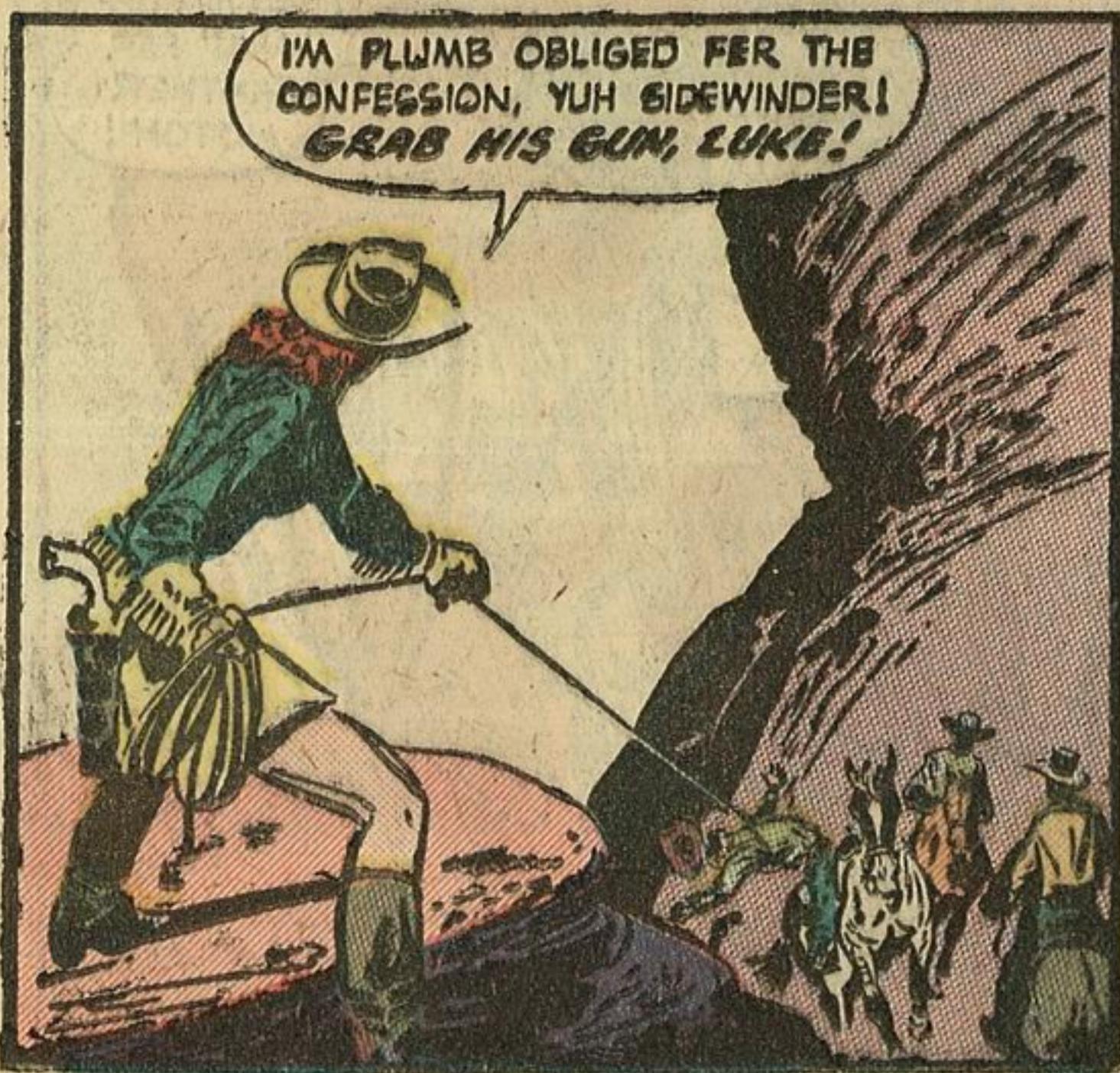
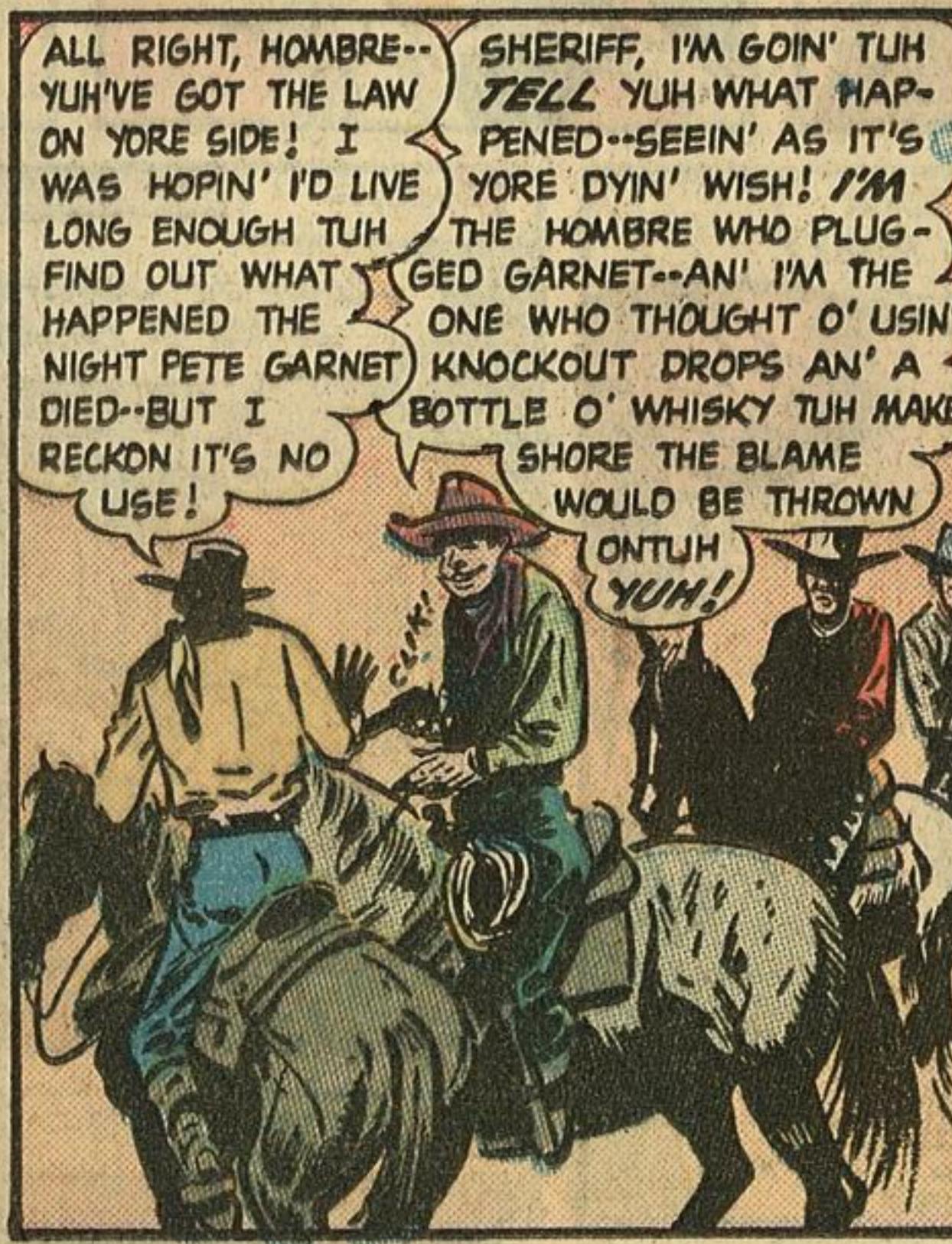
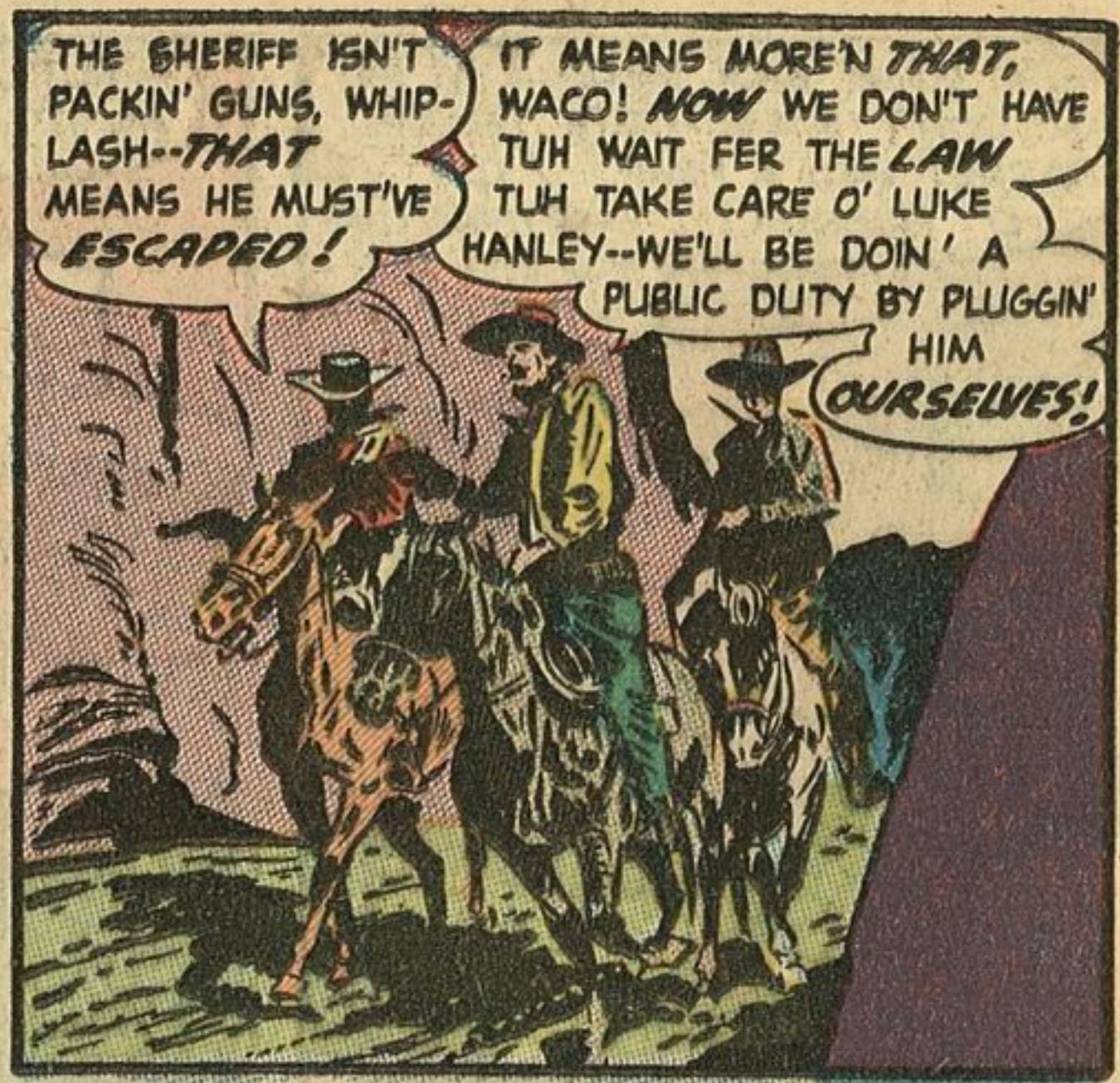
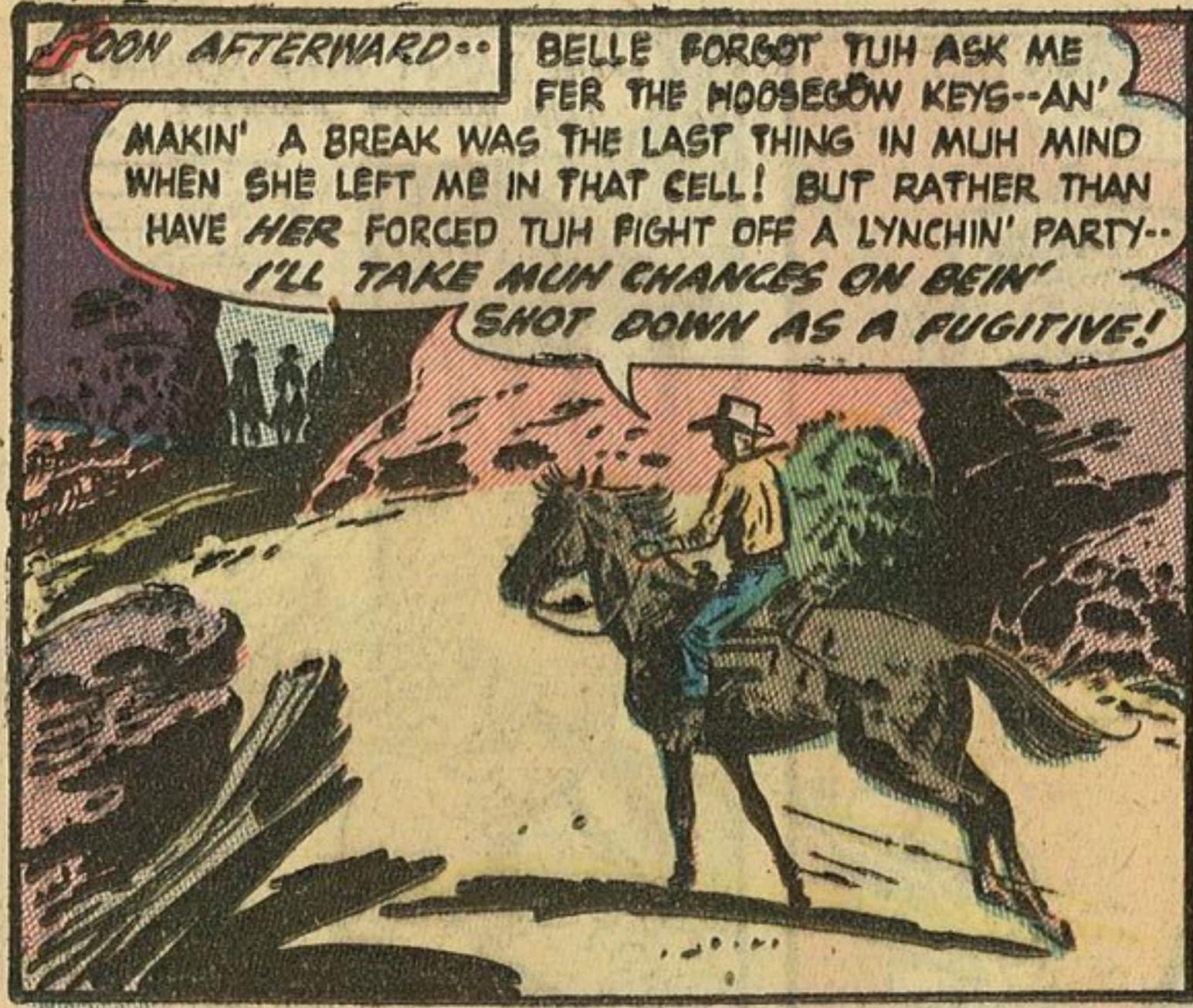
I MEAN BUSINESS TOO, YUH VARMINTS--AN' MY BUSINESS IS THE LAW!

LET'S MAKE TRACKS-- THAR'S NO USE GETTIN' THAT BEARCAT RILED! WHEN SHE SAYS SOMETHIN'--SHE MEANS IT!

YEP--AN' SO DO I! I DON'T HANKER TUH TANGLE WITH THE LAW--BUT WE'RE GITTIN' EVEN WITH LUKE HANLEY--IF WE HAVE TUH BRING EVERY WADDY ON THE GARNET RANCH TUH DO IT!

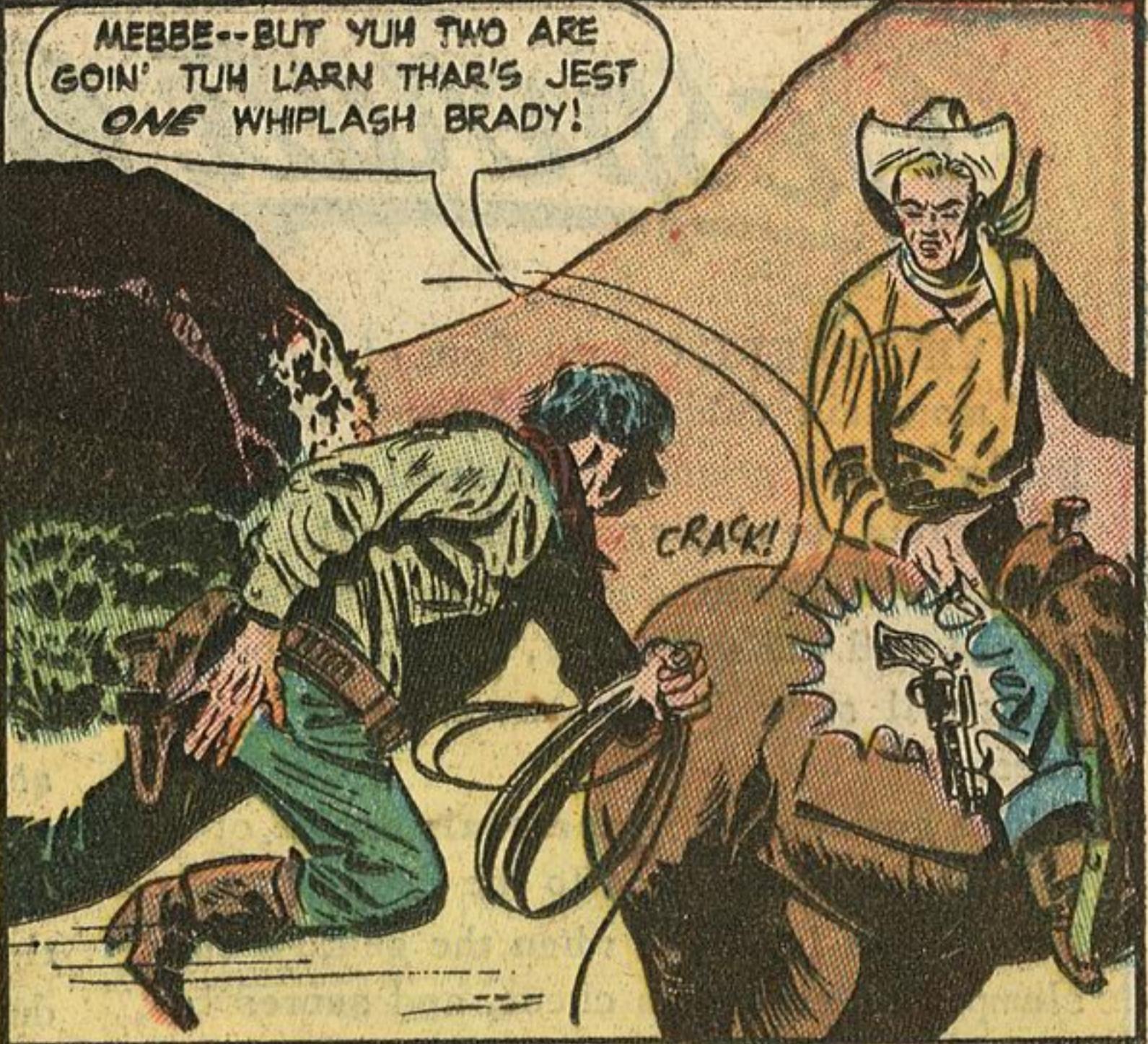
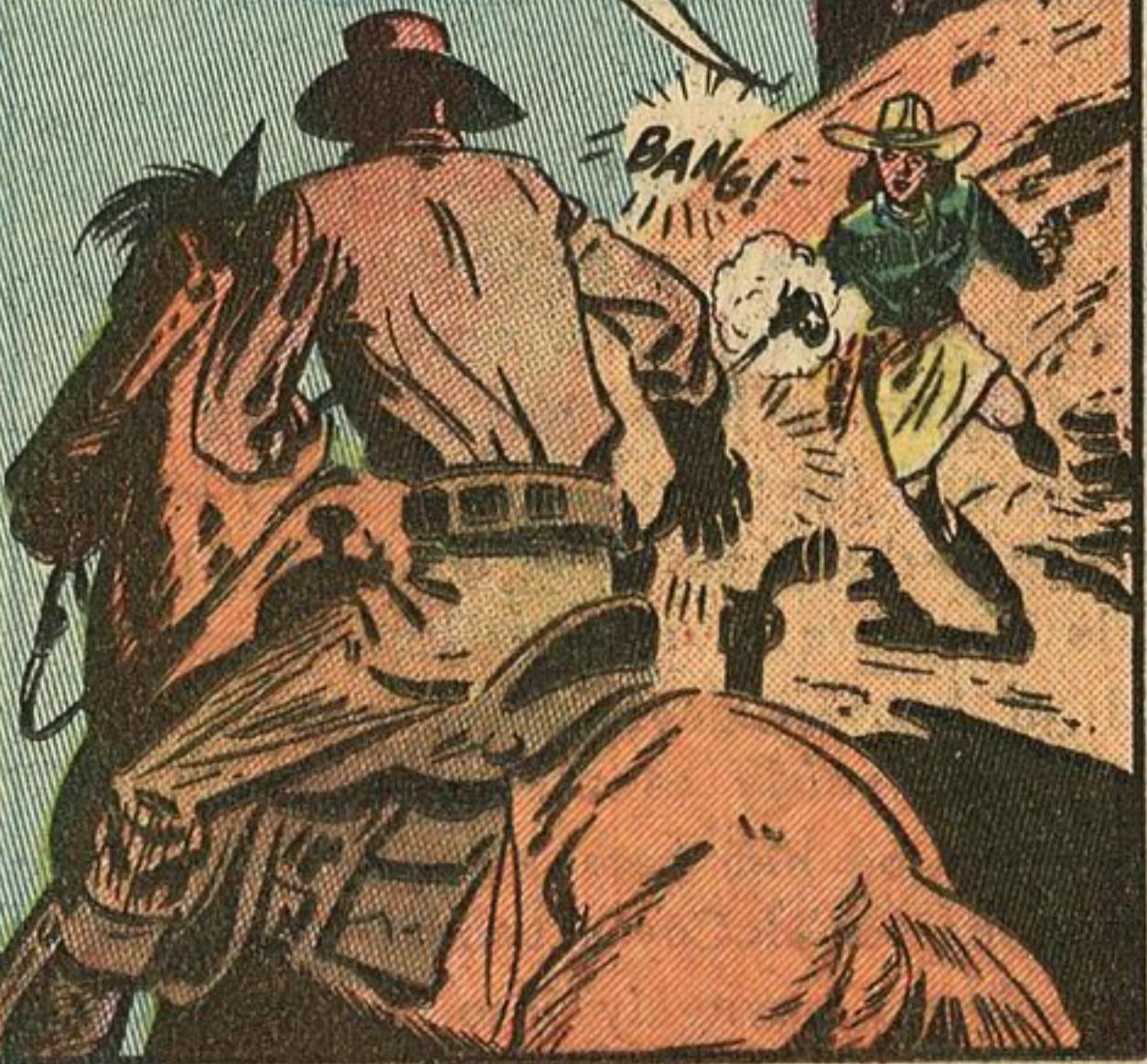






JEST IN CASE YUH'RE FIXIN'
TUH GIT ORNERY--I'VE CORRALED
DOZENS O' VARMINTS
LIKE YUH!

MEBBE--BUT YUH TWO ARE
GOIN' TUH L'ARN THAR'S JEST
ONE WHIPLASH BRADY!

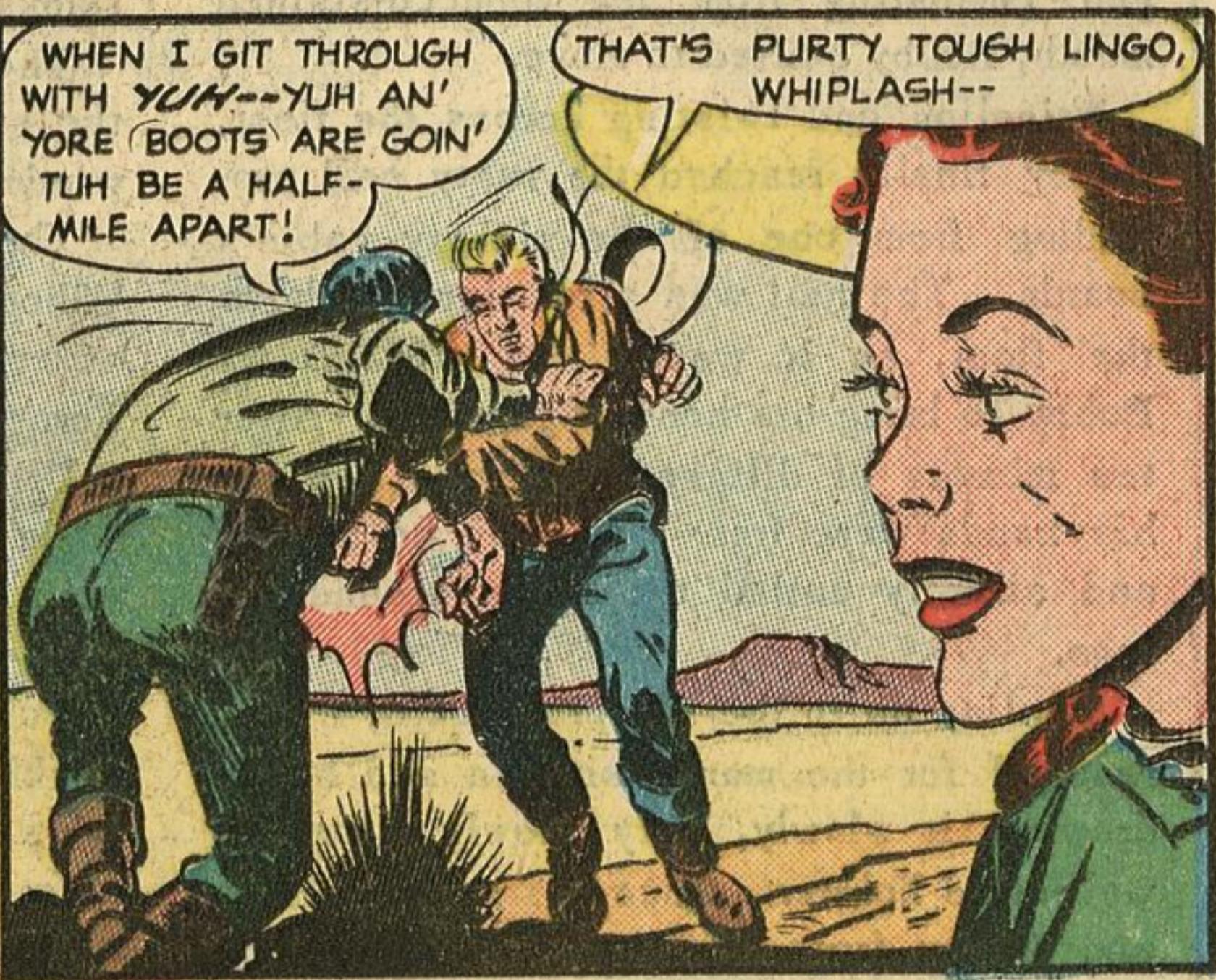


YUH DON'T
GIT MORE'N
ONE WARNIN'
FROM THE
LAW,
WHIPLASH!

TAKE CARE O' THE OTHERS,
BELLE! I AIM TUH SHOW
THIS CRITTER WHAT I KIN
DO WITHOUT A
GUN!

WHEN I GIT THROUGH
WITH YUH--YUH AN'
YORE BOOTS ARE GOIN'
TUH BE A HALF-
MILE APART!

THAT'S PURTY TOUGH LINGO,
WHIPLASH--



--AN' I DON'T AIM
TUH ANSWER BY JEST
TALKIN'!

POW!



LATER--BACK IN TOWN--

I'M SPEAKIN' FER ALL OF US WHEN
I SAY WE ACTED LIKE JUGHEADS,
LUKE! BUT WHIPLASH HAD YUH HOG-
TIED WITH A MIGHTY SLICK FRAMEUP
--AN' NOT AN HOMBRE IN THE
CHEROKEE STRIP COULD'VE

MEBBE NOT, JIM--
BUT I'M SHORE
GLAD I COULD
COUNT ON A
GAL LIKE
BUFFALO
BELLE!

GUESSED
IT!



CATCH BUFFALO BELLE METE OUT JUSTICE
LIKE A REDHEADED RIPSAW--IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF
BLAZING WEST!

[The End.]

Desperate GAMBLE

L YING THERE ON the floor of the crude mountain cabin, bound hand and foot, Bobby Turner grinned to himself as he saw his guard beginning to doze off. "He probably thinks he doesn't have to watch a 14-year-old kid too close," Bobby thought. "But I'll show 'im---as soon as he starts snorin'!"

The gunman sat in the chair on the other side of the cabin, next to the door, his rifle lying in his lap---and when the guard's chin slumped down on his chest, and snores began emanating from the tobacco-stained mouth, Bobby started to move.

Wriggling and twisting across the floor, Bobby finally reached the rusty nail protruding from one of the rickety cabin's boards. The nail was a few inches above the floor, so it wasn't too difficult for Bobby to bring his bonds against it. After ten minutes of diligent, cautious sawing, his hands were free---and then he swiftly and silently untied the ropes around his legs.

Stealing up to the sleeping guard, Bobby reached for the man's six-gun and began drawing it slowly, very slowly, from its well-oiled holster. Once the guard stirred, and Bobby froze, holding his breath, his heart racing with fear. But the snores didn't stop, and finally the revolver was free of the holster.

CRAK!

The gunman slumped to the floor without a sound as the gunbutt came smashing down on his skull. Then Bobby was stealing quietly out of the door, looking towards the lighted window of the other cabin twenty yards away, where the other three gangmen who had kidnaped him were playing cards and drinking. They apparently hadn't heard a thing, and Bobby ran in a half-crouch to the horses tethered to the trees at the edge of the mountain clearing.

There were four horses, and one of them was the magnificent white stallion that be-

longed to Slade McCoy, the leader of the gang. Bobby knew that he could handle any of the other three horses more easily, but he also knew how proud McCoy was of that stallion---and the thought crossed the boy's mind that perhaps the gang leader wouldn't let his men fire at the stallion when the sound of hooves gave the escape away.

Murmuring softly to the white stallion, Bobby mounted him bareback---he couldn't risk hunting for McCoy's saddle---and then dug his heels savagely into the animal's flanks.

The tattoo of flying hooves was heard in the cabin, and Spade McCoy sprang to the window. "Wha---it's the *kid*---on my hoss!"

"The other two men drew their guns. "Shoot 'im down," one cried, "or we'll never git the ransom money from old banker Turner!"

"Hold yore fire!" shouted McCoy. "Yuh might hit Whitey---an' I'll kill the man who even wings muh hoss! The kid can't git away---he's headin' up Dead End Canyon---I reckon he doesn't know this part o' the Rockies! After 'im---on the other hosses!"

Twenty minutes later, Bobby reined the white stallion up sharply as he saw the sheer cliff-walls dead ahead. Behind him sounded the clatter of hooves on the rocky ground, but Bobby didn't have any choice---he couldn't go forward, so he *had* to go back! Wheeling the stallion around, Bobby made his desperate decision---and spurred the horse into a gallop straight at the on-rushing gangmen. The outlaws halted in consternation as they saw the white juggernaut hurtling toward them---and before McCoy could countermand his order about not shooting at the horse, their own horses reared up in fear, throwing the gangmen beneath the flashing, slashing white hooves that trampled them into insensibility.

Bobby's desperate gamble had paid off---and he'd gained a magnificent white stallion in the bargain!

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GOLD TOWN to GHOST TOWN

TYPICAL OF THE MANY FABULOUS GOLD STRIKES IN THE OLD WEST WAS THE ONE MADE IN 1859 BY A HUNTER, BUCKSKIN JOE HARRIS, NEAR THE SOURCE OF THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER IN THE MOSQUITO RANGE OF COLORADO!



CERTAIN OF HAVING WOUNDED THE DEER, THE PUZZLED HUNTER WENT TO SEARCH FOR TRACES OF BLOOD ON THE GROUND WHERE THE ANIMAL HAD STOOD...

YUP, THAR'S DROPS O' BLOOD---
AN'-- AN' SOMETHIN' ELSE!



GOLD-- NUGGETS O' PURE GOLD-- RIGHT ON THE SURFACE-- I--I'M RICH!



YES, BUCKSKIN JOE HAD STUMBLED ON A LODE AS RICH AS ANY EVER DISCOVERED-- A THICK GOLD DEPOSIT RIGHT AT THE VERY GRASS ROOTS! HARRIS WORKED IT LIKE A STONE QUARRY, AND GOLD POURED FROM HIS MINE IN SUCH QUANTITIES THAT HIS CABIN WAS FILLED WITH IT-- EVERYTHING IN SIGHT STUFFED WITH THE PURE YELLOW METAL, EVEN HIS OLD BOOTS!



ALMOST OVERNIGHT A TOWN NAMED "BUCKSKIN JOE" SPRANG UP NEAR THE SITE OF THE MINE, WITH 5,000 MINERS CROWDING ITS STREETS AND RIOTING THERE AT NIGHT! SOON THE GOLD TOWN HAD THREE LUXURIOUS DANCE HALLS, A THEATRE, A BANK, SEVERAL QUARTZ MILLS-- AND A LOOK OF PERMANENCY, AS IF THE TOWN WERE THERE TO STAY!

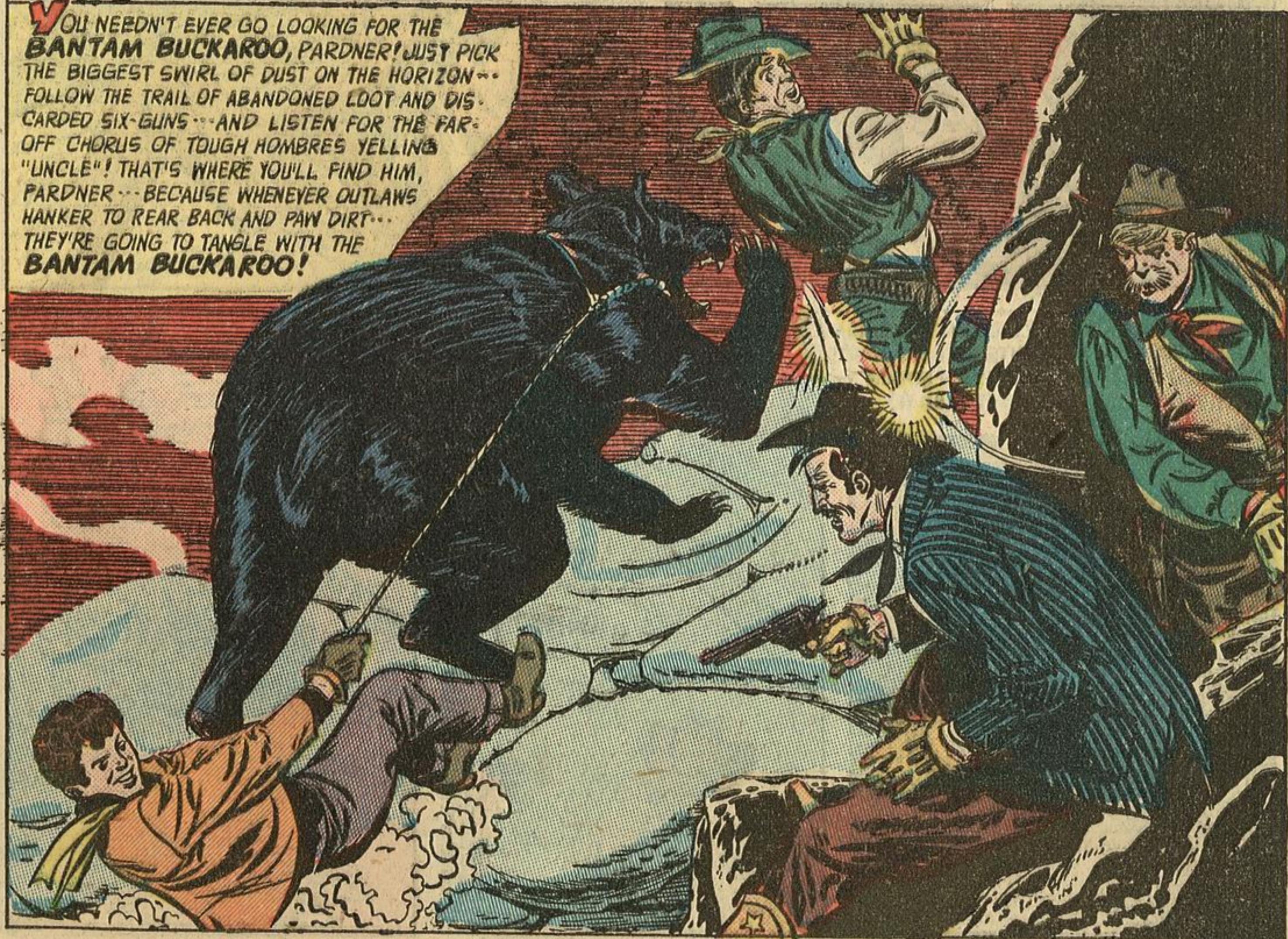


BUT "BUCKSKIN JOE" HAD NEVER BEEN MORE THAN A ONE-MINE TOWN, AND WHEN THE STREAM OF GOLD ABRUPTLY CEASED AND THE BOOM COLLAPSED COMPLETELY, THE TOWN DEPOPULATED ABOUT AS FAST AS IT HAD BEEN BUILT-- ALMOST OVERNIGHT! BUCKSKIN JOE HIMSELF, HAVING SQUANDERED ALL HIS MONEY, WAS FINALLY FORCED TO ABANDON HIS GHOST TOWN IN 1868-- AND DRIFTED AWAY PENNLESS, NEVER TO BE HEARD FROM AGAIN!



BANTAM BUCKAROO

YOU NEEDN'T EVER GO LOOKING FOR THE BANTAM BUCKAROO, PARDNER! JUST PICK THE BIGGEST SWIRL OF DUST ON THE HORIZON-- FOLLOW THE TRAIL OF ABANDONED LOOT AND DISCARDED SIX-GUNS--AND LISTEN FOR THE FAR-OFF CHORUS OF TOUGH HOMBRES YELLING "UNCLE"! THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL FIND HIM, PARDNER--BECAUSE WHENEVER OUTLAWS HANKER TO REAR BACK AND PAW DIRT... THEY'RE GOING TO TANGLE WITH THE BANTAM BUCKAROO!



IT ALL STARTED ONE QUIET AFTERNOON--AT THE HARNEY RANCH...

I SAW LOBO SNEAK INTUH THE BARN AN HOUR AGO--AN' THAR HASN'T BEEN A SIGN OF ACTIVITY SINCE! MAKES MUH FLESH CRAWL TUH THINK OF IT--BUT WHEN THAT YOUNG SCAMP'S QUIET, IT'S A SHORE SIGN O' TROUBLE!

COME ON OUT O' THAR, LOBO! IF YUH'RE LOOKIN' FER SOMETHING TUH DO, YUH KIN RIDE TUH TOWN AN' GIT A HAIRCUT--YUH'RE GROWIN' SHAGGY AS A BEARSKIN!

BEARSKIN!

HUH?

WUF!



SEVERAL MILES BEYOND...

RECKON THAT THAR CAVE WILL MAKE A PURTY GOOD HIDIN' PLACE!

YESSIR, PARDNER... I'LL BET A MILLION BUCKS NO ONE'S EVER BEEN HERE BEFORE!

HUH?

THAR'S A PURTY BAD DRAFT FROM THEM FIGGURES IN THE ROCK... BUT WITH A PILE LIKE THIS'N, IT DOESN'T MATTER IF A FEW DOLLARS BLOW AWAY!

JUMPIN' GOLLIWOGS! THAT'S MUSTANG WILEY AN' HIS PARDS... THE SIDEWINDERS WHO'VE BEEN SHOOTIN' UP EVERY BANK IN THE COUNTRY!

SOMETHIN'S PROWLIN' AROUND OVER THAR! SLAP LEATHER!

HERE'S WHAR IT IS, MUSTANG! LOOK!

JEEPERS! THEY'VE CAUGHT SIGHT O' THE CUB'S SHADOW... AN' IT'S ABOUT TEN TIMES BIGGER'N HE IS!

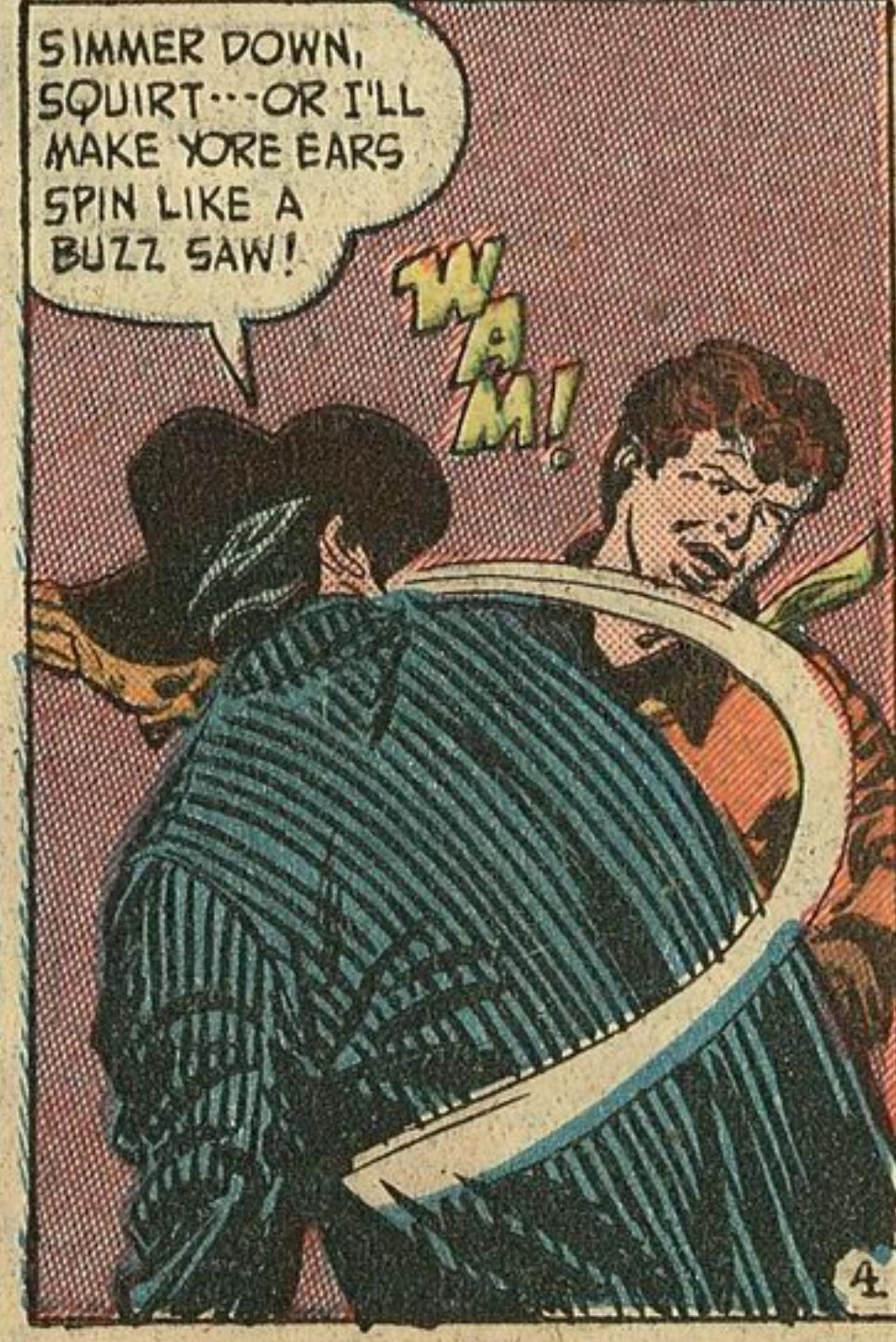
IT'S A GRIZZLY, MUSTANG... AN' HE'S A WHOPPER!

VAMOOSE... BEFORE THAT MAULIN' VAR-MINT SLAPS US HALFWAY TUH THE MOON!

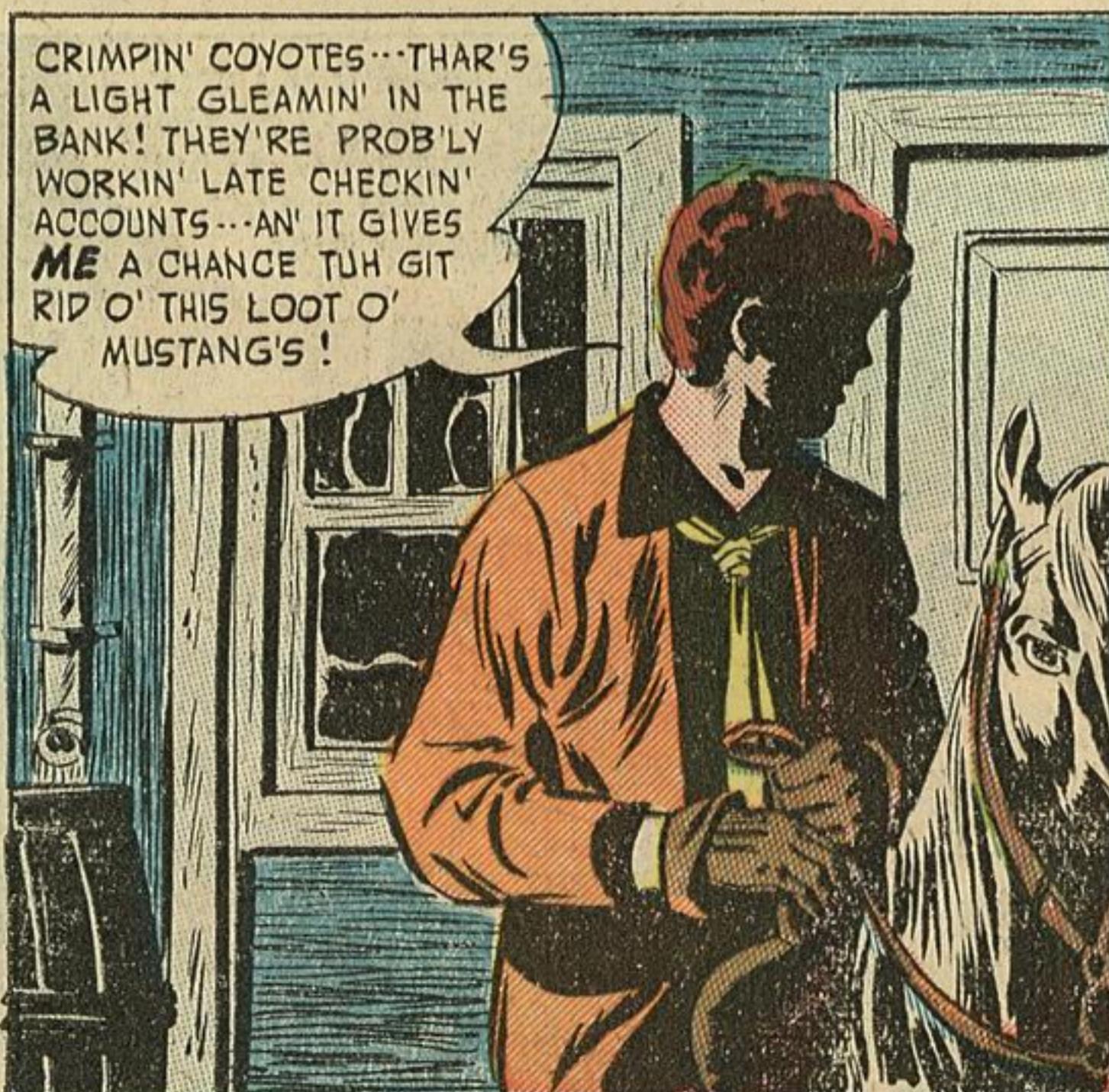
A MOMENT LATER...

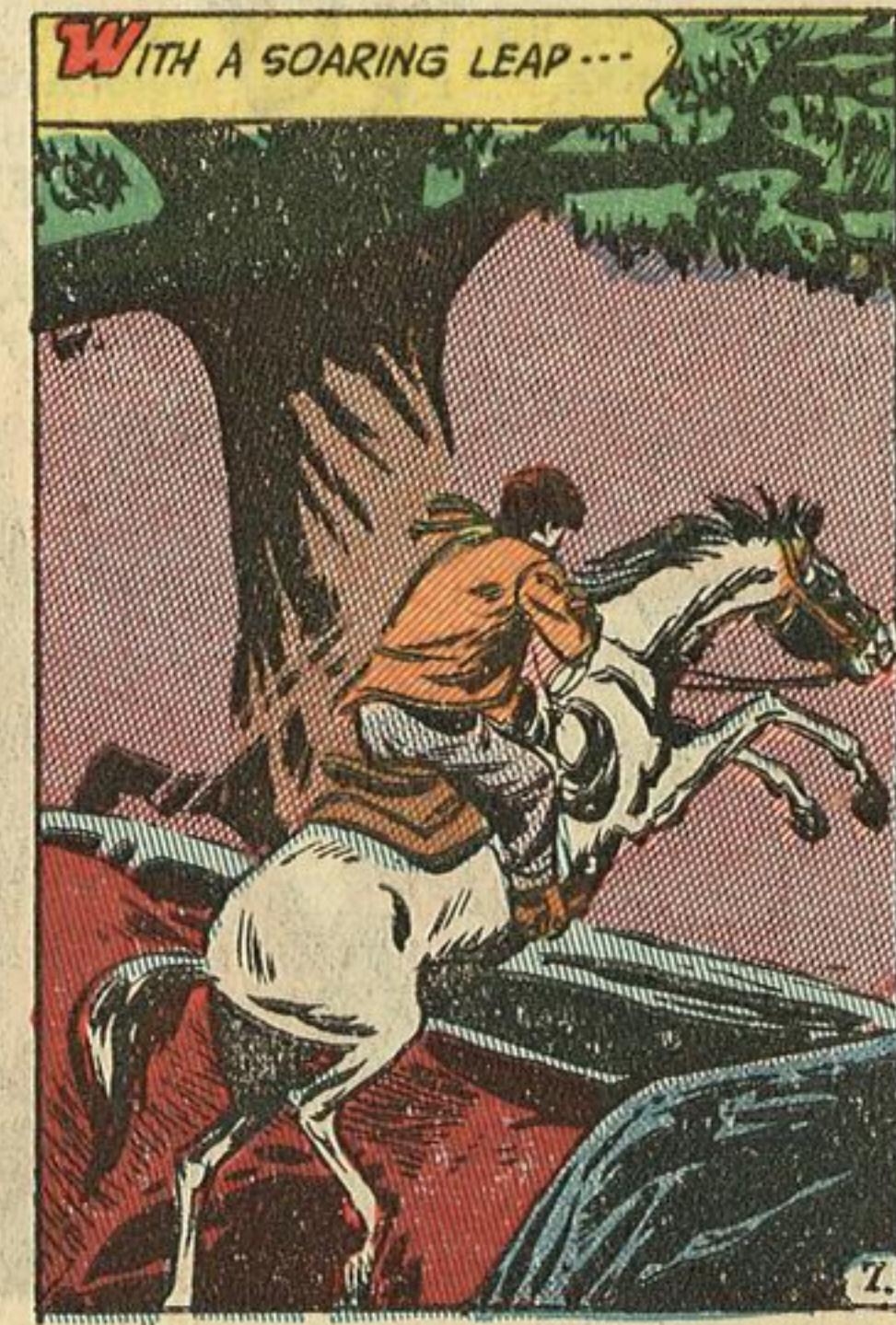
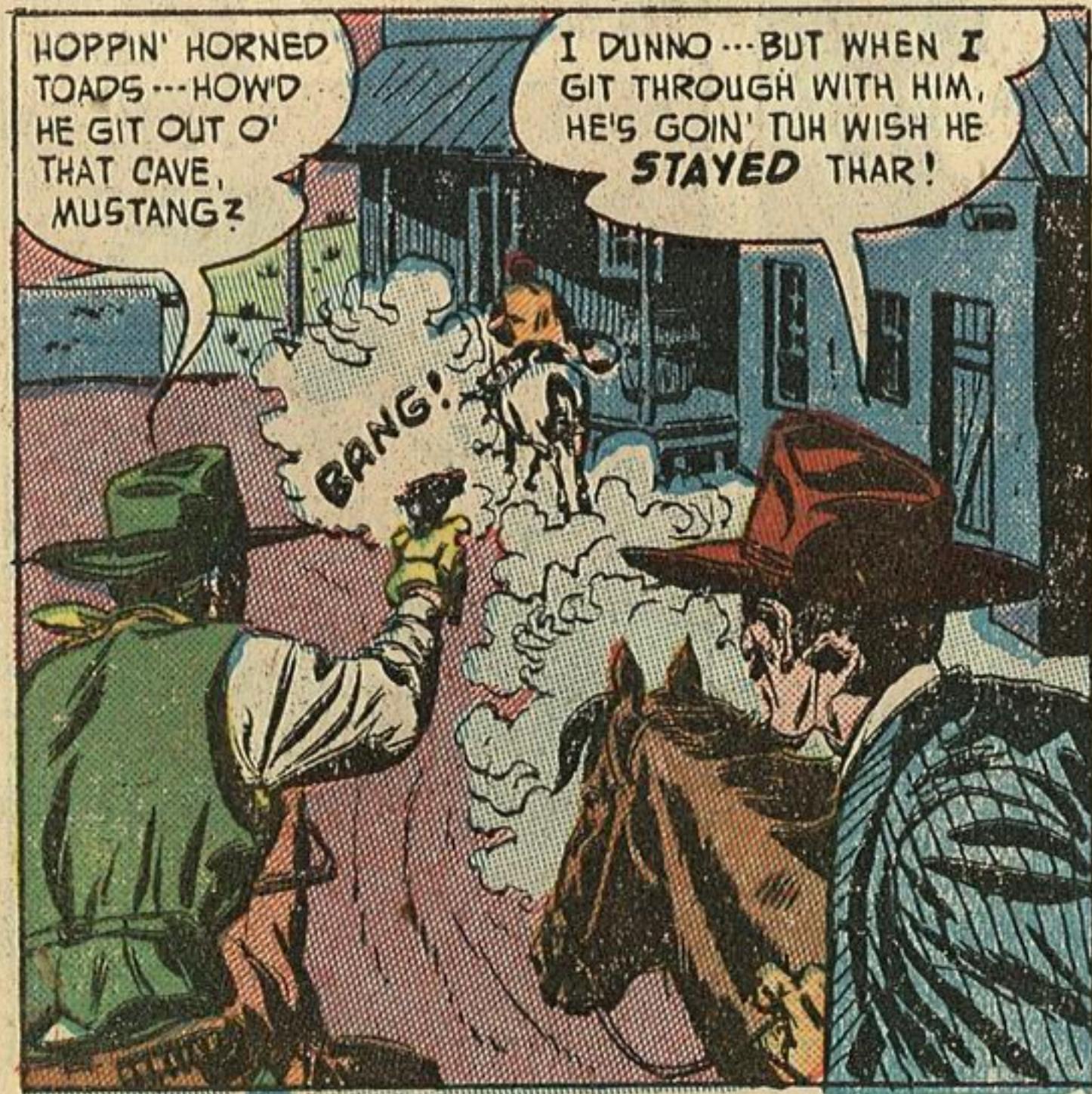
YUH'RE RIGHT! PARDNERS... I'M HEADIN' BACK INTUH THAT CAVE!

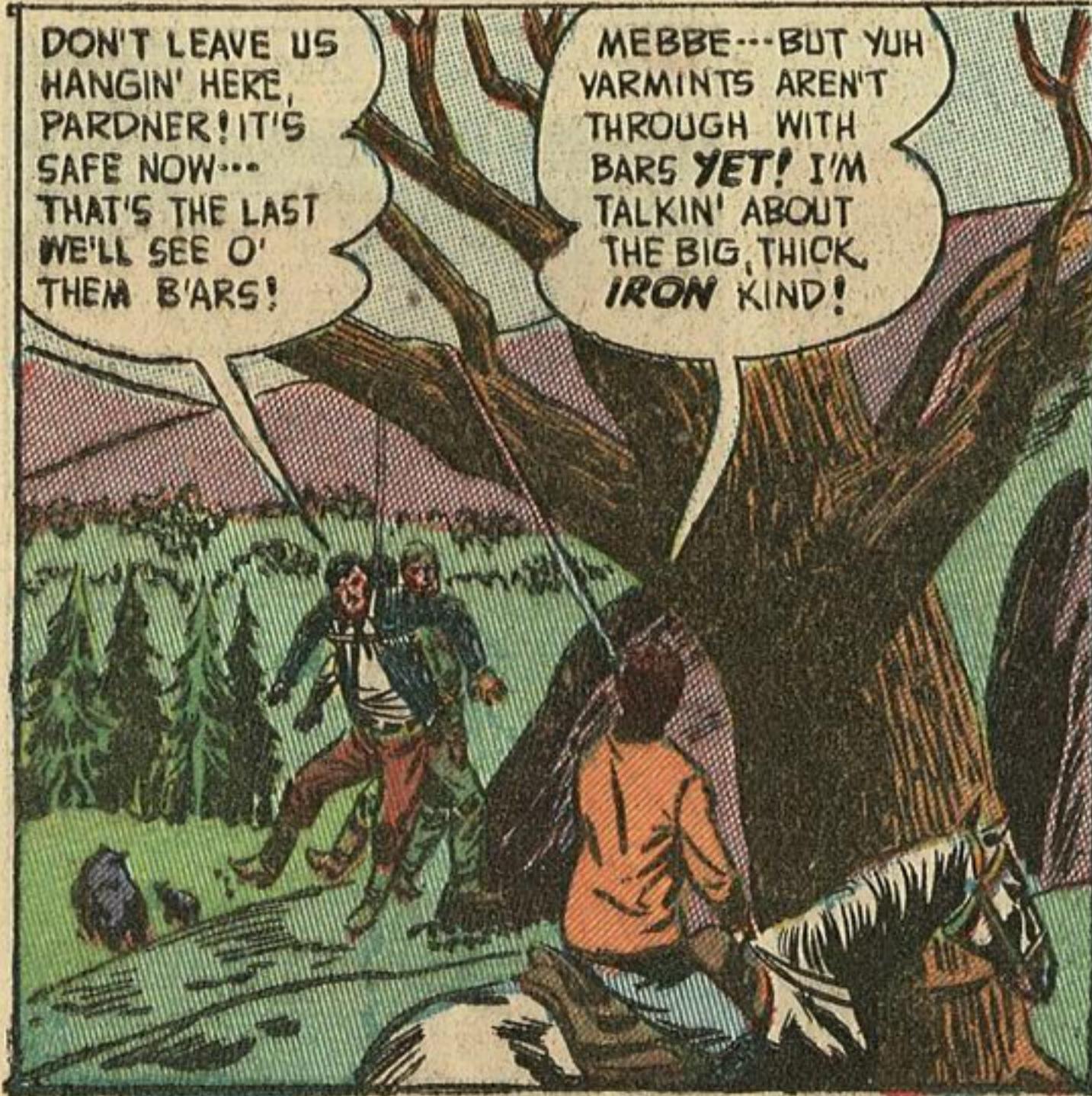
WAIT UP! THE GROUND'S STILL SOFT FROM YESTERDAY'S RAIN... HOW COME THAT GRIZZLY DIDN'T LEAVE TRACKS?











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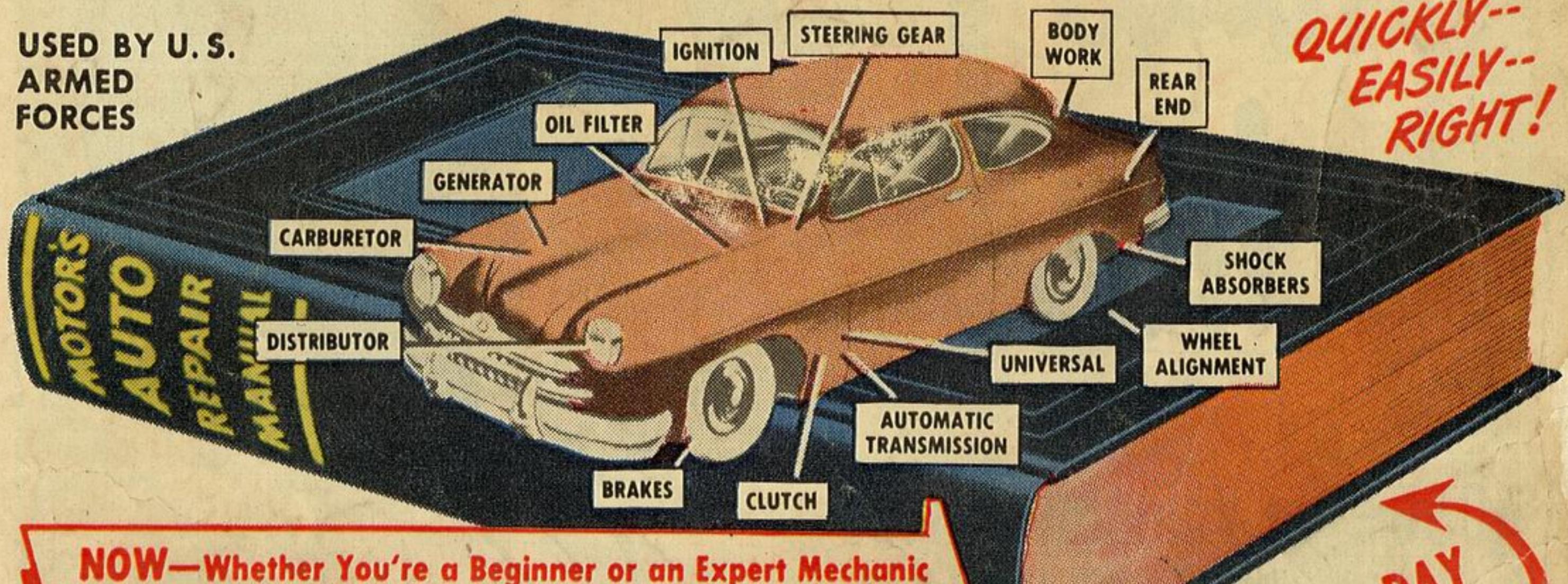
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